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On the Regional Development of Early Medieval Buddhist Monasteries in South Asia
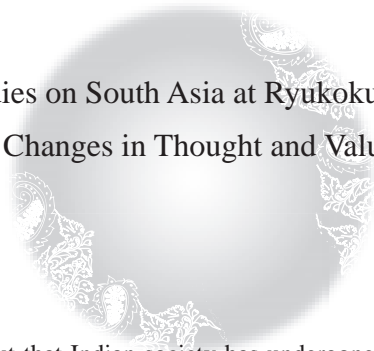
Editors

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RYUKOKU UNIVERSITY

The Center for South Asian Studies, Ryukoku University

Integrated Area Studies on South Asia at Ryukoku University (RINDAS): Fundamental Changes in Thought and Values in South Asia

In many studies, it has been pointed out that Indian society has undergone radical changes since the 1990s. This is seen in the political sphere in the spread and deepening of democracy. In terms of the economy, changes are remarkable in the development of the market economy, improvements in living conditions and widening of economic gaps, which is one of the negative impacts of such economic growth. Socially, this has been expressed through the appearance and rise of various social movements. Culturally and religiously, it has been expressed through a parallel rise in the assertion of identities by diverse communities. These changes can be seen as the results of embryonic fundamental changes in the thought and values of people in India and South Asia.

The unified theme of this project is "Fundamental Changes in Thought and Values in South Asia." One perspective being used to approach this theme is genealogical research along the long timeline of philosophy and thought in South Asian societies, using Ryukoku University's extensive accumulation of research. Another is analysis of fundamental changes in values based on fieldwork research of actual conditions. These perspectives are combined in comprehensive research, with the aim of identifying the sources of changes in the foundations of contemporary Indian and South Asian societies, and the driving power behind them. Special attention is paid to the rise of the Dalits, other traditionally lower strata people, and religious minorities, a phenomenon that represents dynamic changes in contemporary South Asian includes Indian South Asian societies. The project examines the background and theory behind this, with relation to the history of philosophy and thought, and investigates and analyzes changes in peoples' living conditions, consciousness, and sense of values, May not need this, because already stated above.

The "South Asian Area Studies" Project (FY 2016 to 2021) is being operated and conducted by expanding upon the National Institutes for the Humanities' "Contemporary India Area Studies" Project (Phase 1: FY 2010 to 2014, Phase 2: FY 2015). Ryukoku University is one of six institutions working together, conducting joint networked research. It is joined by Kyoto University (the central research hub), the National Museum of Ethnology (the secondary research hub), the University of Tokyo, Hiroshima University, and the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

On the Regional Development of Early Medieval Buddhist Monasteries in South Asia

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Joint Proceedings of the 1ˢᵗ RINDAS International Symposium 2021
Ryukoku University (Kyoto, Japan) July 31, 2021
and
Vihāra Project International Research Workshop
University of Georgia, (Athens, USA) October 28–9, 2021

Contents

Preface

This volume includes six papers presented at three different venues, i.e. a conference panel entitled "After the Golden Age: Apogee or Decline? Resituating Regional Buddhist Visual Cultures in Medieval South Asia (8th–13th century CE)" at the College Art Association Annual Meeting in New York (February 15, 2019); the International Symposium "Revisiting Buddhist Monasteries in the Gupta and Post-Gupta Periods," sponsored by Ryukoku University, Center for South Asian Studies (RINDAS) (July 31, 2021), and an International Research Workshop of the *Vihāra* Project "On the Regional Development of Early Medieval Buddhist Monasteries in South Asia," hosted by the University of Georgia Center for Asian Studies (October 28–9, 2021). These three events constituted key components of two larger collaborative research projects supported by the National Institutes for the Humanities ("Integrated Area Studies on South Asia" or INDAS-South Asia) and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (KAKENHI Grant No. 18H03569, "Comprehensive Studies of Indian Buddhist Monasteries from the Gupta Period Onward"). For more details about each event, please consult the List of Research Presentations and Venues on the following pages.

It is our pleasant obligation to thank Kohei Yamazaki for hosting the 1st RINDAS Symposium and for kindly permitting the publication of our research in the RINDAS Series of Working Papers. We are equally thankful and deeply indebted to Taiken Kyuma, the Principal Investigator of the *Vihāra* Project, for his tireless support and invaluable assistance for all aspects of the research activities of our Art and Archeology Team, including field excursions to India, the organization of workshops and symposia, and for providing many useful suggestions for the publication of this volume. Without their energetic support, this volume certainly would not have come to fruition. We would also like to express our special thanks to Maitripushpa Bois, who carefully copy-edited and formatted all of the chapters, and to each author for completing their papers in a timely manner, responding to our questions, accepting our editorial decisions, and for enthusiastically supporting this publication.

Abhishek Singh Amar (Hamilton College)
Nicolas Morrissey (University of Georgia)
Akira Shimada (SUNY New Paltz)

List of Research Presentations and Venues

Papers included in this volume are listed in **bold**.

(Max Deeg's paper published in this volume is a revised version of both his presentations)

VENUE 1

107th College Art Association Annual Conference
February 15, 2019, Hilton Midtown, New York City

Panel title

After the Golden Age: Apogee or Decline? Resituating Regional Buddhist Visual Cultures in Medieval South Asia (8th–13th century CE)
Chair: Nicolas Morrissey (University of Georgia)
Discussant: Jinah Kim (Harvard University)

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An Unnoticed Aṣṭamahābhayatārā Relief from Andhradeśa
  Akira Shimada (SUNY New Paltz)

Ritual Efficacy, Astral Deities, and Regional Patronage at Nandhadīrghika-vihāra, West Bengal
  Nicolas Morrissey (University of Georgia)

Monastic Funerary Iconography in South Asia from the 9th to the Early 13th Century
  Kurt Behrendt (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

VENUE 2

The 1st RINDAS International Symposium 2021
July 31, 2021, Ryukoku University, Kyoto

Symposium title

Revisiting Buddhist Monasteries in the Gupta and Post-Gupta Periods
Chair: Taiken Kyuma (Mie University)
Discussant: Yuko Yokochi (Kyoto University)

Presentations

Trajectories of Buddhist Monasteries in the Gupta and Post-Gupta Periods:
An Archaeological Overview
  Akira Shimada (SUNY New Paltz)

Revisiting the Great Monastery: Nālandā Mahāvihāra
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VENUE 3

Vihāra Project International Research Workshop
October 28–9, 2021, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

Workshop title

On the Regional Development of Early Medieval Buddhist Monasteries in South Asia

Presentations

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Special Lecture
Esoteric Buddhism in the Matrix of Early Medieval India: An Overview
 Ronald M. Davidson (Fairfield University)

October 29

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Sankaran: Late Buddhist Monastic Architecture in Northern Andhra
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Workshop Presentation
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 Abhishek Amar (Hamilton College)

Workshop Presentation
Post Gupta-Vākāṭaka Buddhist Art in the Deccan: Reflections on Patronage and Ritual in the Early Medieval Milieu
 Nicolas Morrissey (University of Georgia)

Afternoon Session
Special Lecture
Between Normativity and Material Emptiness: Indian Buddhist Monasteries in Chinese Travelogues
 Max Deeg (Cardiff University)

Special Lecture
Views from the Black Mountain: The Rock-Cut Mahāvihāra at Kānheri/Kṛṣṇagiri in Konkan
 Pia Brancaccio (Drexel University)

Esoteric Buddhism in the
Matrix of Early Medieval India:
An Overview

Ronald M. Davidson (Fairfield University)

INTRODUCTION

The origins of esoteric Buddhism have been contested since the time of its advent, but few of the traditional or modern models proposed have taken into account the socio-political contextual realities of early medieval India. In actuality, esoteric Buddhism came of age in the aftermath of the disintegration of classical India, following the Gupta–Vākāṭaka period, which lasted from approximately 320 to 550 CE. The Gupta–Vākāṭaka classical period had provided north and central India with a remarkable efflorescence in literature, based on a relatively stable political culture that was increasingly favorable to the Sanskrit dimensions of brahmanical lore. Consequently, during this classical period, the use of Sanskrit came into its own, with royal edicts and political documents reflecting the increasing importance of this language, which had been primarily utilized for religious or intellectual applications. In this vein, Sanskrit became employed for broader literary purposes, with the consequence that its continuing use in the religious and intellectual spheres transformed it not only in depth and vitality, but also in its flavor and tempo. Within this environment, art moved toward a formal canon, sometimes called the international Gupta style, and brahmanical influence spread through areas of India not previously under the sway of caste and the rituals of the twice born. Consequently, the Vedic schools of ritual (*śākhā*) became more broadly distributed. During this classical period, north India continued to have cultural, religious and political dominance over the less orthodox areas in the east and south.

Mahāyāna Buddhism, operating as a specific religious vocation within minority religious communities, benefited from these developments, and many of the great luminaries of Mahāyāna philosophy lived during or shortly after the Gupta. Buddhist monasteries became great centers of culture in both north and south India, with notable institutions in Gandhāra, Kashmir, along the Gangetic valley, in west India, Orissa, the Krishna River valley, in Andhra and along the Tamil coast. The early decentralization of monastic enclaves meant that many of these monasteries had different architectural styles and were subject to a bewildering variety of Buddhist monastic rules.

While these had broad agreement in their substance and organization, they were modified locally by substantial power dynamics and independent policies and procedures.

It is less frequently acknowledged, however, that the Mahāyāna of the Gupta period also saw several significant ritual and sociological developments. Ritually, Mahāyāna centers developed a variety of behaviors dedicated to the worship of both Śākyamuni and other Buddhas, such as the various Buddhas of the past, both through offering systems and later through the emerging *dhāraṇī* texts. Moreover, rituals developed around the teaching of the dharma: formally honoring the teacher, requesting the teaching with specific liturgical formulae, taking refuge and voicing aspiration prior to or during teaching, and the transfer of merit following instruction. Especially significant were the confession rituals, whether those central to the *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* or from other sources.[1] Mahāyānists also generated a new form of vows, the bodhisattva vows, which in select cases employed a one-on-one transmission of the Mahāyāna. In this regard, at least from the 4th century CE, Mahāyānist authors like Asaṅga espoused gateway rites in which the candidate could receive the bodhisattva vows either from a learned, human master or from an envisioned Buddha as preceptor (*bodhisattvaśīlasaṃvarasamādāna*).[2] It was the combination of many of the specifically Mahāyānist approaches brought together as the 'seven branches of practice' in the *Bhadracaripraṇidhāna* — later included in the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* — that proved so persuasive to those seeking ritual expressions.[3]

We may recognize that Mahāyāna ritual, especially the reception of the bodhisattva vow, was qualitatively and instrumentally different from the monastic vows. Monastic vows were received from a group of masters (a minimum of 5) and often by a group of candidates. Additionally, ordination by envisioned preceptors was not an option available to monastic candidates, as they were required to live in proximity to their preceptors for a probationary period. With the

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[1] *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, Chapter 3. I have seen no argument to challenge Nobel's assessment that *"Das dritte Kapitel trägt die Bezeichnung deśanā-parivarta und is der Kern unseres ganzen Goldglanz-Sūtra."* (Nobel 1937: XXXIV). Kuo 1994 provides a welcome survey of confession documents and their reception in China. More recent scholarship on the Chinese recensions of *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* includes Radich 2014 and Ludvik 2006. Greene revisits the issue of confession in the context of early meditative documents (Greene 2021: 159–204).

[2] *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. Wogihara 1930–6: 152.18–155.21; Dutt 1966: 105.4-107.5; T.1579.30.514b11-515a9; T.1581.30.911b18–913a5; T.1582.30 is less help in understanding the received text; D.4037.82b5–84a5. Cf. Tatz 1986: 60–2 follows the Tibetan rather than the received Sanskrit version.

[3] See Dessein 2003 on the textual history of the *Bhadracaripraṇidhāna*. The *Bhadracari* was not included in either of the two earlier translations of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* within the *Avataṃsakasūtra* (T.278, T.279), both translated by Buddhabhadra. In distinction, his early 5th-century translation of the *Bhadracari* (T.296) appears to have been entitled **Mañjuśrīpraṇidhānasūtra* (*Wenshu-shili-fayuanjing* 文殊師利發願經). Perhaps it was only associated with Samantabhadra once it had been placed in the Samantabhadra section of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, which was already present without the verses: T.278.9.784a1-788b1; T.279.10.439b-444c. This hypothesis would solve some textual curiosities.

reception of bodhisattva vows — whether from a physical or an envisioned preceptor — the bodhisattva path could become an actual practice for those aspiring to 'ride the vehicle of the Mahāyāna' (*mahāyānayāyin*) rather than a mythological ideal exhibited solely by supernormal personages. We also get a sense that such rituals became more important and expanded over time with great differences in both the content of the vows as well as the procedures for their transmission. Consequently, we do not see any one 'bodhisattva vow' system, but multiple — and quite distinct — sets of bodhisattva vows.[4]

The other important ritual development was the formulation of *dhāraṇīs*, coded phrases that were understood to be the essence or encoded form of a teaching, a scripture, or even of the entire canon.[5] The category of '*dhāraṇī*' initially arose out of the experience of writing in the Gandhāra area, for the earliest *dhāraṇīs* were understood to replicate the *a-ra-pa-ca-na* alphabet used in the northwest. As Buddhists reflected on the power of rendering scriptures into a written format, they evidently expanded the application so that non-referential mantra phrases (*iti miṭi kiṭi*, etc.) initially employed for apotropaic purposes eventually came to be understood to encode bodies of doctrine and scripture. The idea behind this was to appropriate the brahmanical ideology of the Vedas encoded in the syllable OṂ, and to extend this ideology to virtually all sounds. This was possible both because Buddhist doctrine had deconstructed the relationship of word and object — i.e., the sounds of the world were without necessary reference to any single object — and because Mahāyānist authors were exploring the idea of universal interdependence. Accordingly, some Mahāyānist texts maintained that *dhāraṇīs* were non-referential and therefore comprised the nature of emptiness, thus employing sounds in a new way to express a standard Buddhist doctrinal theme. The pragmatics of *dhāraṇīs*, moreover, utilized linguistic aspects derived from the Vedic schools or other sources, reapplying them in a new environment. Even so, the mythological and ritual frame of reference for the early *dhāraṇīs* was entirely Buddhist. They might feature previous Buddhas preaching this or that *dhāraṇī* to a bodhisattva who then recited it in the present narrative or depict protectors reciting one to the disciples of the Buddha for their individual protection.

Sociologically, at least two new developments are seen in the Gupta–Vākāṭaka period. First, the earlier preaching traditions of Buddhist orders became articulated in the environment of the developing Mahāyāna canon. In this nexus, the preacher generally became known as a *dharma-bhāṇaka*, the teacher of the Mahāyānist Dharma. *Dharmabhāṇakas* were understood to be moved by inspiration (*pratibhāṇa*) to explain and interpret the various *sūtra*s, usually in a highly ritualized gathering.[6] It is fair to say that the composition and propagation of the most popular of Mahāyāna

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[4] Habata 2021.
[5] Davidson 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2017b.
[6] MacQueen 1981, 1982; Braarvig 1985; Nance 2008; Drewes 2011.

*sūtra*s (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Suvarṇabhāsottama*, etc.) were those in which the *dharmabhāṇakas* played a central role, both mythically (as categories of humans mentioned in the *sūtra*s) and literally as the actual preachers of the *sūtra*s.

The second sociological development was a manifestation of the importance of both the *dharmabhāṇaka* and the ideology of lay life: the rise of the lay teacher, a *dharmabhāṇaka* who was not a monk, even if he may have lived inside monastic enclaves. Fǎxiǎn mentions two in residence around Pāṭaliputra — one Mañjuśrī and a *Reva(n)tasvāmin— and this appears the earliest datable mention of actual Indian Mahāyāna lay teachers by name.[7] However, one could easily conclude that the scriptural stories of Vimalakīrti and Śrīmālā as lay teachers were patterned after such real *dharmabhāṇaka* in Magadha or elsewhere. Hirakawa's thesis that the Mahāyāna was a predominantly lay movement is no longer credible, so these individuals should be understood to be the interesting and important exceptions rather than the rule.[8] Even so, they are still indicative of the increased aura of the lay bodhisattva. Perhaps the list of bodhisattvas encountered by Vimalakīrti in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* may serve as a guide. He has five bodhisattvas visit him, only one of whom (Sudatta) is clearly a layman.[9] Nonetheless, we should not err in dismissing these figures as inconsequential, for they established a paradigm that charismatic laity could be — and evidently sometimes were — teachers of both monks and laymen, in contravention

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[7] *Gaosang faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯傳 T.2085.51.862b2-11. Deeg 2005 discusses this material (388–92) and translates it (548), but I differ with his interpretation. Specifically, he proposes Mañjuśrī to be another name for *Raivatasvāmi (per his reconstruction of 羅汰私迷 (391)), and that this person may have been the owner of the monastery (*vihārasvāmin*: 390, note 1834), based on the discussion of Schopen 1996. I do not believe this to be the situation. In the first case, *Reva(n)tasvāmin is identified as living alone and behaving in a manner appropriate for a lay *brāhmaṇa*, with elaborate concerns for personal purity. Conversely, Mañjuśrī lives in the Sucitra monastery, which is — by brahmanical standards — a ritually polluted environment, as all Buddhist monasteries were. In the second case, neither Schopen nor Deeg take into account the well-attested cognomen of -*svāmin* employed in onomastics throughout the inscriptional record. The term has significance in identifying the god as possessor of a temple. As a name, it would seem to indicate a relationship to a divinity in a temple, in this case Revanta—or perhaps its prakritic reading of Revata, sometimes seen in Buddhist names—which is preferable to Raivata. Revanta (the son of Sūrya) temples are attested in the 5th century; see Sharma 1973. Names of both divinities and *brāhmans* with -*svāmin* as the second term are frequently seen in Gupta era and later inscriptions, as in the Damodarpur copperplate inscription of Budhagupta (Fleet 1888, CII 3: 342-3), which lists the two gods Kokāmukha-svāmin and Śvetavarāha-svāmin as the recipients of support. In the case of *brāhmans*, the name would be analogous to the later -*dās* ending ('one whose lord is the God') so that brahmanical onomastics, given by the family, emulated the onomastics of divinities. The much discussed Guṇaighar copperplate inscription of Vainyagupta (507 CE), a donation to a Buddhist monastery, includes the name of one Revajjasvāmin, an official entrusted with the execution of the grant by Vijayasena, the official executor (Sircar 1965: 343, line 17 and note 5). I am tempted to identify this as a miswriting of, or local pronunciation of Revantasvāmin.

[8] Hirakawa 1963.

[9] *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* III §§ 49–76 has episodes with four bodhisattvas, whereas Mañjuśrī's interaction is in IV *passim*.

to the established pattern of Indian Buddhist hierarchy to that date. This direction will eventually yield the disreputable *dharmabhāṇaka* in Vārāṇasī depicted in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, which defends them even while acknowledging their manifold lapses from normative Buddhist standards of virtue.[10]

CONTESTED ORIGINS

The origins and meaning of tantric Buddhism remain contested, in some measure because the archive is fragmented, with the majority of the early documents surviving only in Chinese or Tibetan translation, each with its own manifold textual problems. One line of argument has been that tantric Buddhism is 'Śaivized Buddhism', meaning that the rituals and practices of Śaivism were taken over into Buddhism with little change, yielding tantric Buddhism. Alexis Sanderson, the most distinctive proponent in the recent period, maintains that differences between tantric Buddhism and tantric Śaivism can be attributed to miscopying by semi-literate Buddhists.[11] On a different note, Bronkhorst has proposed that classical and post-classical Buddhism is 'Brahmanized' Buddhism, meaning that the use of Sanskrit and the status of brahmanical ideology informed important segments of the Buddhist agenda.[12]

Without contesting that both tantric Śaivism and brahmanical ritual were very important and influential in the maturation of tantric Buddhism, it may be observed that the early archive — primarily surviving in Chinese translation — has not been engaged to date, so that it appears premature to posit sweeping and reductive conclusions. Yet even with the data currently available, neither position takes into account that much of what we know of the practices eventually called 'tantric' happened outside of either the Śaiva or brahmanical aegis. Early documents in Pali, Prakrit, and Chinese demonstrate that the use of cemetery rituals, the carrying of skulls, rituals for raising the dead, ingestion of unwholesome substances, etc., existed outside of recognized sectarian lines long before the rise of tantrism, and appear as incidental to Śaiva practice as they are to Buddhist practice, for mainstream versions of neither adopted their use.[13] Moreover, narrative and non-Śaiva literature describes a world in which such cemetery practices continued in groups outside of the Śaiva domain throughout the medieval period. Indeed, the contribution of non-Śaiva local practices and Buddhist doctrine to Śaiva tantrism has not been entirely considered, despite available evidence.[14] Only now is there some acknowledgement of the

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[10] *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* II.6: 298.10-12: *sa ca dharmabhāṇakaḥ śīlavipannaḥ ācaravipanno bhāryāputraduhitṛbhiḥ parivṛtaḥ kāṣāyoccāraprasrāvaparipūrṇaḥ asaṃvṛtteryāpathaḥ∥*

[11] Sanderson 2001; 2009: 214-16.

[12] Bronkhorst 2011.

[13] Davidson 2017a and forthcoming.

[14] Ratié 2010 and others have shown such doctrinal infusions; Griffiths 2004–5 has demonstrated that the

possible Buddhist contribution to what is considered signature Śaiva yogic praxis.[15]

Sanderson, in particular, has proposed that early medieval India was a period of Śaiva dominance, and that the Buddhist appropriation of Śaiva documents was motivated by the royal promotion of Śaivism.[16] Yet the record of royal dedication does not exactly support Sanderson's proposal, since the overwhelming majority of imperial donations went to *brāhmaṇs*, irrespective of the sectarian proclamation of the primary donor.[17] As Schmiedchen has observed for the Kaṭaccuris, Gurjaras, Sendrakas, and Rāṣṭrakūṭas,

> Although the political conditions were entirely different, as the Rāṣṭrakūṭa empire united many territories which had been fragmented earlier, including the Gujarat and north-western Maharashtra, the patronage pattern did not differ much from the Traikūṭaka —Kaṭaccuri — Gujara period: Three quarters of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa charters recorded grants in favour of Brahmins.... Despite the relatively large number of kings calling themselves *paramamāheśvara*, it was apparently not Śaiva institutions but Vedic Brahmanism that turned out to be the most successful religious tradition in the competition for royal support.[18]

Similar results are seen in the case of the Chālukya of Vātāpi, in the inscriptions of the Maitrakas, the records of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, and in the Pāla affirmation of Buddhism.[19] In such cases, *brāhmaṇs* were the primary recipients of donations, not the sectarian enterprises, a reality already seen in the Valkhā kingdom in central India and elsewhere during the Gupta era.[20]

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figure of Tumburu, later identified with Śiva, began as a tree spirit.

[15] Mallinson 2020.

[16] Sanderson 2009: 232.

[17] Sanderson 2009: 116, 249, 300 acknowledges that neither the donative record nor the archaeological record supports the model that royal sectarian affiliation necessarily equals donations to those same sectarian institutions. He consequently proposes that *brāhmaṇs* and Śaivas formed a cooperative whole, Śaivism subsuming Vaidika practices and *brāhmaṇs* widely incorporating Śaiva practices (249–52, 301–3). He revisits the question (2013: 224) but the lack of granulation or specifics make his calculations unverifiable. Suffice it to say that others, like Schmiedchen (see the following note), do not present the data in the same manner. Cecil 2020: 44 offers a corrective in the evaluation of Śaiva inscriptions, and notes the dissonance between the claims of sectarian literature and the inscriptional record.

[18] Schmiedchen 2013: 357–8; similarly Schmiedchen 2014: 158 and her data 460–85.

[19] Njammasch 2001: 279; Puri 1986: 220–35; Padigar 2010 *passim*.

[20] Ramesh and Tewari 1990: 60–70; Ghosh 2015: 13 notes that only the first king, Bhuluṇḍa, donated to temples; all the other donations were to *brāhmaṇs*. Furui 2013a, 2017 discusses Gupta donations in Bengal. There were no Vākāṭaka royal inscriptions concerning Buddhists, only those by a minister, Varāhadeva; compare this to the 26 dedications to *brāhmaṇs* (see Shastri 1997). Similar data is available for the Maukharīs (Thaplyal 1985), Aulikaras (Balogh 2019), Parivrājakas (Fleet 1888 *CII* 3: 93–116), Uchchakalpas (Mirashi 1963 *CII* 5: 89–92; Fleet 1888 *CII* 3: 117–34) and Śarabhapurīyas (Shastri 1995/2: 5–13), to only mention the most important ones. While this list does not include several of the scattered epigraphs published subsequent to the main publications, it is representative of the distribution of imperial donations, the overwhelming majority of which favor *brāhmaṇs*.

It would seem that the majority of the royal sectarian affiliation statements within epigraphs in the early medieval period invoke for the king what the *Arthaśāstra* terms "establishing his intimacy with the gods" — already implied in the Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka — as a posture for public consumption rather than the narrowly focused affirmation of royal support for sectarian institutions.[21]

There were exceptions, to be sure, with the support of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins for Buddhists in the 5th–6th centuries and that of the Kakatīyas for Śaivas in the 13th century, but these were exceptions that tended to prove the rule.[22] While such donations were occasionally acknowledged, that does not alter Sanderson's broad statements of Śaiva dominance, complete with a model of the 'absorption' of spirit cults and sectarian traditions, some of which, in reality, did not appear to have been absorbed.[23] Donative inscriptions — and the stated religious affiliation of Indian royalty — demonstrate the historical reality seen in earlier inscriptions and in the archaeological record: royal donations were not necessarily the primary means of support of religious traditions, although they could be and sometimes were.[24]

Sanderson's model is in great degree predicated on styles of discourse found in unpublished texts, so that we must await the laborious philological work of textual publication and analysis before we can determine the merit of his proposals, a statement I already made in 2002 and still

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[21] Kangle 1965: *Arthaśāstra* 13.1.3 *daivayogasaṃsthāpanaṃ*; see also 7.15.28 *daivatasvastivācaneṣu tatparā āśiṣo vācayet*; 10.3.33 *kārtāntikādiś cāsya vargaḥ sarvajñadaivatasaṃyogakhyāpanābhyāṃ svapakṣam uddharṣayet parapakṣaṃ codvejayet*. Intimacy with deities is emphasized in the *Nītisāra* 4.7a (Mitra 1982) *daivatasampannatā buddhiḥ* where the deity gives the king immediately whatever he likes, a trope found in Buddhist *dhāraṇī* and tantric texts and elsewhere in India.

[22] Tournier 2018 explores the Viṣṇukuṇḍin instances; Talbot 2001: 88–90 explores the Kakatīya inscriptions and indicates that, prior to around 1000 CE, the primary recipients were *brāhmaṇs*, whereas by the time of the 13th-century Kakatīyas, Śaiva recipients had come to the fore. Sanderson 2009: 258 foregrounds the Kaśmīri and Kakatīya instances as emblematic of the era.

[23] Bisschop 2018: 1 makes a similar argument; Sanderson 2009: 45–53 further proposes that goddess and solar cults were largely 'subsumed' into Śaivism, which does not entirely accord with evidence; e.g., the archaeology of the *mātṛkā* with such variations discussed by Meister 1986, or the Rajasthan shrines examined by Gold 2008, not to mention the solar shrines, e.g, Mevissen 2006, 2012, 2016. The kind of Sūrya–Śaiva syncretism implicated by Sanderson's model is evident in Modera (see Mankodi 2009), but it does not seem to be ubiquitous elsewhere in the way he has argued; see also Srivastava 1996: 67–80.

[24] Rees 2009, 2016. Akira Shimada kindly shared the article by Dehejia 1992, who proposed that pan-Indian corporate, collective patronage was only a function of the early period, displaced later by royal patronage. This may be true in the pan-Indian sense — she presents insufficient data to verify that — but corporate collective patronage was certainly evinced in various places, as the case of the Mandsaur Inscription of the Silk Weavers (see Balogh 2019: 87–109). While Sanderson 2009: 300 cites Talbot's work with approval, he does not acknowledge that not only does her assessment counter his uncomplicated model of royal patronage, it in fact implicates a much more complex system (Talbot 2001: 107–25). We may also observe that Sanderson's model requires that all kings in India were sincere in their proclamations of affiliation. Furui 2020: 116–9 describes royal donations precipitating the growth of Buddhist institutions in Bengal and Magadha, but elsewhere (148–52) demonstrates the complicated nature of royal patronage.

remains disappointingly true to this day.[25] Yet again, with the posting of a few diplomatic texts on the Muktabodha website, the proposed relationship of the *Tantrasadbhāva* and the *Laghu-saṃvara*, for example, does not accord with his model.[26] In reality, his proposal that much of the Vajrayāna is simply the Buddhist miscopying of Śaiva texts is a position redolent of Abraham Geiger's 1833 *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen*, which proposed that the *Qur'an* is a mishmash of miscopied sections from Judaic scriptures. Geiger's model has long been understood to be an example of problematic reasoning concerning textual transmission, as it does not take into account the oral background of societies in which literacy was rare.[27]

One factor of note is that one of the most distinctive elements of Śaivism — its doctrinal content on the relationship of Śiva to tantric initiates — is scarcely found in tantric Buddhism until rather late in its development, from the 9th century forward. Analogues to the 'realities' (*tattvas*) of the *Śaivāgamas* may be seen in the Buddhist doctrine of the 'natures' (*prakṛti*), but these latter are equally dependent on the old Sāṃkhya-Yoga system.[28] Neither do we find Buddhist mention of other standard *Śaivāgama* topics, like the temple-based construction programs. Likewise, there is scant evidence of Śaiva interest in specifically Buddhist endeavors, such as the many painting rituals found in the various esoteric works from the time of the **Mūlamantra* forward, given the Śaiva focus on permanent temple sculptures instead of transportable images on cotton.[29]

Given these limitations, we might be expected to turn to Bronkhorst's model of brahmanization, in which Buddhists labored "in the shadow of Brahmanism" (Bronkhorst 2011). Yet again, this appears somewhat reductionistic. Had brahmanization been such an important factor,

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[25] Sanderson 2009: 216: "In all cases the Śaiva passages fit neatly into the contexts in which they occur, without ragged edges, as it were, at their beginning and end, whereas this is often not so with the parallels in the Buddhist texts, a circumstances that fits well with the scenario in which the latter were constructed by a rather careless process of extraction, insertion, and superficial editing." Davidson 2002a: 203 pointed out that such proposals require the publication of the complete texts; arguments of this variety remain the burden of the proposer to demonstrate.

[26] Davidson 2006 (as yet unpublished). Sanderson 2001: 43, 2009: 187 proposed that the chapters 22–4 of the *Laghusaṃvara* were based on Chapter 18 of the *Tantrasadbhāva*. That seems improbable, as the texts appear to draw from a common oral source but not from each other. Muktabodha Indological Research Institute website: https://muktabodha.org/.

[27] See Firestone 2003: 7–11. On the paucity of literacy in medieval India, see Davidson 2017a: 4. While Geiger had the confidence that the Hebrew writings he cites actually predated the *Qur'an*, there is no direct evidence for Śaiva sources predating the Buddhist ones. In considering scholarship on Śaivism, we often run into speculative chronologies absent of an evidentiary basis.

[28] Wayman 1977: 185–99.

[29] Recently, Goodall and Isaacson 2016 have resurrected the 'common culture' thesis that was fielded by an earlier generation. However, as is often the case with these kinds of argument, attention is given to selective evidence in a single text, here the *Mañjuśriyamūlakalpa*, with little search for or acknowledgement of precedents; see Davidson 2019 for the painting rituals that are central to the program of this text. The primary interest in painting in brahmanical texts is found in the well-known *Citrasūtra* of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*: see Mukherji 2001.

we might have expected the Buddhists to have accepted and institutionalized caste and the other strategies of social essentialism found in the brahmanically formulated *varṇāśramadharma*. Caste eventually became important in both Nepal and Sri Lanka, but we see little evidence for caste institutionalization in Buddhist records in India. In this light, Bronkhorst's argument that in accepting the medium of Sanskrit, Buddhists also accepted brahmanical authority seems reminiscent of a strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis — that language determines perception and category construction — and appears somewhat excessively emphasized.

In fact, Kulke has pointed out that a contrary effect — which he called "kṣatriyaization .... a type of social change which was initiated through the social and ritual requirements of local rājās or chiefs" — is found throughout medieval India.[30] We do see that Buddhists appropriated some brahmanical ritual structures (see below), but their reception of these was selective, targeted, modified and appropriate to their needs rather than more generally distributed. Indeed, since the central ritual of tantric Buddhist transmission is patterned after the coronation ritual of kingship (*abhiṣeka*), Kulke's model is at least as fertile as the others and has the advantage of recognizing the regionality of medieval Indian political and religious systems, a factor somewhat ignored in the pan-Indian models of Sanderson and Bronkhorst.

And to this last point, it may be observed that proponents of such overarching positions tend to represent their proposed source traditions as rather monolithic, exclusively elite and literate, and rather static. They seldom acknowledge that the Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and brahmanical schools were continually (re-)negotiating many of the same factors as the Buddhists in the medieval period.[31] Once we reach into the records of local shrines, familial rituals, stray cultic enterprises, festivals, and possessive states, we begin to understand both the complexity and fertility of Indian religious expression in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. All this invites us to understand Indian religious groups as continually hybrid and syncretic in their composition, rather than there being authentic religion in one place (Śaivism, brahmanism) and inauthentic religion elsewhere, the leitmotif of much writing by those concerned with hierarchy, authenticity, and purity.[32]

THE POST-GUPTA TRANSITION

With the decline of the Gupta–Vākāṭaka rapprochement in north India, south India found room to extend its power and authority in a manner not seen before. The Chāḷukya (at Vātāpi) and the Pallavas (at Kāñcīpuram) began expansive campaigns in the 6th and 7th centuries, a period in which northern Indian institutions found themselves weakened and vulnerable.[33] Even the modest

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[30] Kulke 1993: 82–92, quote on 92.
[31] von Stietencron 1985; Nath 2001.
[32] See van der Veer 1994.
[33] Recent inscriptional studies clarify this situation: Padigar 2010 and Francis 2013–17.

successes of the Maukharis and the Vardhanas in the 6th and 7th centuries were little impediment to opportunistic raids from the south and east.[34] Consequently, the Gangetic valley centers of commerce intermittently found themselves in a refugee crisis, with populations fleeing the major centers and seeking asylum elsewhere. Because they were no longer subject to the centralized dominance of the Guptas, local tribal groups and regional political clans gathered strength during this period. With the aid of the cultural and intellectual capital embodied in brahmanical and Buddhist migrations from previously robust economic centers, some tribal groups rebranded themselves as *kṣatriyas* or some other caste and began to observe Sanskritic ritual systems in search of legitimacy. This became a phenomenon papered over in legal literature as the 'mixture of castes' (*varṇasaṃkāra*), meaning that new 'birth groups' (*jāti*) were understood to be the mixture of castes, whereas they actually appear to be new social forms of tribal or rural origin that were rebranded for orthodox purposes. With trade suffering, an economic depression descended on many areas, so that the use of barter re-emerged as the primary means of commerce, with a concomitant paucity of coins, particularly those of large value. Most of the political centers did not issue much in the way of coinage, so that east India tended to employ cowries (*monetaria moneta*) for small transactions whereas Abbasid coins from the Caliphate were circulated in the south. It was not until the 9th–10th century that trade became more robust and guilds re-emerged in detail in the inscriptional record.[35]

The consequences of these changes for the society overall were extraordinary and, for north India, not particularly welcome. The guild system that had maintained much of the Buddhist synthesis in the previous centuries became threatened and, in some areas, seems to have virtually disappeared.[36] The decline in some forms of trade appears reflected in the emergence of 'cashless' economies: neither the major players nor their *sāmanta* vassals issued coins and seemed to have been content to employ the modest cowrie shells or foreign currency as money.[37] High value–high frequency transactions seem to have been best done with the medium of metal, especially silver. Alternatives were possible — letters of credit, for example — but metal remained an ideal standard against which to gauge value within fluctuating commodity markets so as to facilitate exchange. However, its paucity was a problem. Other monetary media were available — silk or spices, depending on the circumstances — but in the absence of a well-established currency, much negotiation is required, requiring time and incurring concomitant opportunity costs. We can appreciate this difference by observing the respective material remains of the Guptas and the

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[34] Davidson 2002a; Chattopadhyaya 1994.

[35] Thaplyal 1996: 140–8; Furui 2013b.

[36] Furui 2013b: 391; Gopal 1989: 81.

[37] Deyell and Mukherjee 2019 build on the work of Deyell 1990, 2001; Furui 2020: 141–8 on the rise of *sāmantas* in Bengal and the region.

Vākāṭakas. The Vākāṭakas operated in commodities exchange and paid opportunity costs by not promoting the robust monetization apparent in both the west (among the Kṣatrapas) and the east (by the Guptas).[38] As a consequence of the transformation of exchange systems rather than monetized systems benefitting locality, trade in early medieval India became increasingly organized by political agents of royal authority. In these circumstances, the revenues lost by the slow economic decline could be taken directly to treasuries from the income from royally managed trade, but at the expense of craft and trade guilds, with a net reduction of commerce.

Politically, India entered a period in which the primary relationship was between the 'overlord' (rājādhirāja) and his circle of vassals (sāmantamaṇḍala), each of which maintained a court of their own, analogous to that of an overlord. Loyalty was maintained by the normative procedures of oaths of fealty, marriages, exchanges of gifts and titles, and rituals of coronation (abhiṣeka) in which either the vassals would attend the coronation of the overlord or else the overlord would preside directly over the coronation of the vassals. Such political organization meant that there was consistent redundancy in the various levels of government, exacerbating the economic difficulties by engendering a large rent-seeking aristocracy. It also precipitated excessive concern with borders and yielded a near-constant, low-level conflict, all of which slowed authorized movement and accelerated an influx of displaced persons into regional centers, whether peasants, artisans, ascetics, or brāhmaṇs.

Religiously, the period saw the tightening of the relationship between political dominion (kṣatra) and religious authority (brahman), although these relationships were exhibited in diverse ways. One dimension is clear: kings derived their legitimacy, in part, from their relationship to the folk and tribal deities of the area, who often functioned as the family divinity (kuladevatā) of the royal family, the chosen god of the king (iṣṭadevatā), or the state deity (rāṣṭradevatā).[39] Other kings sought power from the affiliation with other deities, but in almost all cases, the royal strategy employed brāhmaṇs as recipients of gifts irrespective of personal affiliation. Legitimacy again appears to be a primary motive, as royal inscriptions declare their purpose was to augment familial fame. As the 706 CE Navasari plates of Jayabhaṭa III declare, the gift was given "By me, to increase the merit and fame for my father, mother and myself, in this life and the next."[40] This was a phrase widely found in royal epigraphs of the period and illustrates the perception that donations to brāhmaṇs served several discrete functions, most of them comprising a political soft

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[38] Shrimali 1987: 4–31. Historical claims about the economic vitality of the two Vākāṭaka kingdoms, those of Nandivardhana and Vatsagulma, appear to conflate their clear artistic and intellectual achievements with their less robust economies, perhaps the result of Marxist suppositions that these two are necessarily linked.

[39] Kulke 1993: 114–36.

[40] Mirashi 1955/1: 86, line 18: yathā mayā mātāpitror ātmanaś caihikāmuṣmikapuṇyayaśobhivṛddhaye.

power on behalf of the king.[41] Yet it is also true that in the process, *brāhmaṇs* became clients of royalty, with their functions as distributors of justice and law slanted on behalf of the king, reinforcing his power and authority.[42]

As the symbolic bonds of *kṣatra* and *brahman* grew closer, so too did the representations of both kings and deities, so that crowns were found on deities, much as the kings were coronated to be composed of fractions of the gods.[43] This did not, of course, restrict warfare, which was endemic in certain areas and at certain times, with the burning of cities and fields, imprisonment of the population, and other strategies employed so often that they are mentioned with pride in some dynastic inscriptions. Dynasties suffered from succession battles as well as from usurpation by previously loyal vassals. The symbolic transformation of vassal into overlord mimicked the established ritual principle that some gods could be replaced by other gods. As one divinity might be replaced by a second in an important ritual, one king could be replaced by another at will.[44]

Buddhist institutions became enmeshed in this change of fortunes in a variety of ways. South India, particularly the Krishna River valley and the southern Deccan, became inhospitable to Buddhist establishments, and the decline and near abandonment of the great centers around Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati from the 7th to the 10th century was emblematic of a wider sense of the challenges Buddhists encountered in the period.[45] While some of the Buddhist institutional movement away from this area may be attributed to a loss of patronage, the precipitous nature of the change can be better understood as the result of official harassment, restrictions on activity, seizure of monastic farmland, and other forms of implied or actual violence from the governing

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[41] Kulke 1997 addresses this function.

[42] Modern models for patron–client relations (e.g., Anderson, Francois and Kotwal 2015) may be useful in assessing patron–client/*rāja–brāhmaṇa* relations in early medieval India.

[43] *Mānavadharmaśāstra* VII.4-5 characterizes the king as fashioned from parts of the gods of the eight directions: Indra, Vāyu, Yama, Sūrya, Agni, Varuṇa, Candra and Kubera.

indrānilayamārkāṇām agneś ca varuṇasya ca /
candravitteśayoṣ caiva mātrā nirhṛtya śāśvatīḥ ‖ 4
yasmād eṣāṃ surendrāṇāṃ mātrābhyo nirmito nṛpaḥ |
tasmād abhibhavaty eṣa sarbhūtāni tejasā ‖ 5

[44] Granoff 2004: 27: "But here the text says something that must strike the reader as unusual. It is not Sūrya who is installed in the chariot, but any god that the person performing the ritual wishes to have there: 'A person should summon by name and worship that god to whom he is devoted, whoever that may be.' Curiously, what follows is a prayer to Sūrya."

[45] Tournier 2018: 24–5. This paper discusses epigraphic finds from the 'Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa' project which indicate 5th–6th century CE Viṣṇukuṇḍin support for Buddhist, especially Tāmraparṇīya, monks, but also acknowledges that there is little epigraphic evidence of Buddhist activity after the 6th century CE. This is similar to the archaeology discussed in Subramanian 1932. There is some Buddhist activity in 7th–8th century Aihoḷe; see Padigar 2010: 261–4. Amaravati may have had continued activity during this period, but corroboratory evidence is slight. However, there was a later Amaravati phase of re-emergence, when there was a revival of edifice and epigraphic evidence; see Knox 1992: 15.

institutions. We may detect a foreshadowing of the current Indian political policy on the treatment of rural minorities within the ancient archaeology of Buddhist sites in 7th–8th century Āndhra.

If the public world seemed harsh to them, the sociological developments in Mahāyāna assisted the Buddhist teachers' quiet domestication. Once some of them developed a lay life, the laicized *dharmabhāṇaka* became predictably engaged in the various concerns and transitions normative to Indian lay society; this direction foreshadowed the more aggressive process in Nepal in the medieval period and Japan in 1872 with the *Nikujiki Saitai* law (肉食妻帯). In India, this meant that the quotidian rituals, as exemplified in the domestic ritual texts (*gṛhyasūtra*, *-pariśiṣṭa*, *-vidhāna*), would act as the standard for ritual procedures. These under-studied rituals and their texts were quite widely distributed, and had been going through exceptional transformations in the several centuries leading up to the formation of tantrism. It was the authors of the *gṛhyasūtras* who first modified their old earth altar (*sthaṇḍila*) into the earliest *maṇḍalas*, initiating the incorporation of baleful spirits, difficult planets, deities of the directions, and local gods into these *maṇḍalas*.[46] They had developed new mantras, including those for local gods and spirits, allowing the latter to be integrated into rituals like marriage and other rites of passage. Some authorities augmented the ritual entrance into studentship (*upanayana*) to emulate factors of the royal coronation ceremony (*abhiṣeka*) and employed analogous rites for the confirmation of ritual authority on elderly men in the community (*śatābhiṣeka*). Most of these rites required but a single fire, so that both the form and theology of fire was articulated as a relationship between the ritual officiant and the deity who resides in the fire. These initiatives established the ritual menus employed by *dharmabhāṇakas*, first in association with the *dhāraṇī* scriptures of the 4th to 6th century, and then later with the development of early Buddhist tantrism in the late 6th or early 7th century.

The specific rituals appropriated by Buddhist *dharmabhāṇaka* were not indiscriminate, however, but targeted according to their needs, and the occasional branding of esoteric Buddhism as 'export brahmanism' is in error.[47] How so? First, there is little evidence for Buddhist interest

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[46] Davidson 2017b; Einoo 2005; Wessels-Mevissen 2001. There is much more to be said on this topic.

[47] Sharf 2017: 85–6 calls attention to Yixing's 一行 (683–727) labeling of *homa* and other ritual practices as a "Buddha Veda" (佛韋陀) in his influential commentary to the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi* (T.1796.39.780b13-15), with a similar usage discovered by Sylvain Lévi in Bali. However, this term may have been employed in East and Southeast Asia, the classification was likely to extend in some manner from the prior Indian use of the nomenclature "*X*-Veda" to denote forms of knowledge and ritual practice. For example, the *Gopathabrāhmaṇa* I.1.10 describes the creation of five other Vedas in the various directions: a *Snake-Veda* in the east, a *Ghoul-Veda* in the south, a *Demon-Veda* in the west, a *History-Veda* in the north, and a *Narrative-Veda* in the zenith and nadar: *sarpavedaṃ piśācavedam asuravedam itihāsavedaṃ purāṇavedam iti | sa khalu prācyā eva diśaḥ sarpavedaṃ niramimīta | dakṣiṇasyāḥ piśācavedam | pratīcyā asuravedam | udīcyā itihāsavedam | dhruvāyāś cordhvāyāś ca purāṇavedam |*. Each of these has its sacred word associated with it, to be recited (Bloomfield 1899: 107–8) Similarly, there

in the high-status *śrauta* or *soma* rituals, which have received the lion's share of scholarly interest in Indology and remained the *sine qua non* of brāhmaṇical authority. Buddhist rites — like most tantric rituals — are with a single fire, most often in a circular or occasionally a triangular pattern, forms appropriate for the domestic fires articulated in the *gṛhyasūtras* or their appendices (*pariśiṣṭa*) and supplementary rites (*vidhāna*). Now for their part, the *gṛhyasūtras* classify their own rites according to a three-fold classification of use and a four-fold classification of ritual. Rites may be obligatory (*nitya*) according to a time-sensitive program or for specific purposes (*naimittika*s) as in rituals of passage, or optional (*kāmya*) for other purposes left to the individual's or their client's discretion. They may offer with fire (*huta*), without fire (*ahuta*), both (*prahuta*), or the feeding of *brāhmaṇs*.[48]

Among these categories, Buddhist rituals were adapted from the *vidhāna* and *pariśiṣṭa* literature of domestic ritual from several different lineages (*śākhā*), not just one. Buddhists formulated rituals that were *naimittika* (rituals of passage, like *abhiṣeka*) and seldom *nitya*, although some traditions required daily *abhiṣeka* rituals, fortnightly gatherings or the daily recitation of mantras. Most Buddhist ritual, however, is *kāmya*, optional, and uses both *huta* (burnt) and *ahuta* (non-burnt: *bali*) offerings, but certainly not offerings to *brāhmaṇs*. A telling omission is the Vedic initiation (*dīkṣā*), a fundamental ritual of the great Vedic ceremonial programs, employed by all the Hindu sectarian systems — Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, or Smārta. Moreover, other standard rites — expiation (*prāyaścita*), ancestral (*śrāddha*), and others — were either quite differently done or avoided altogether. Such dissimilarities extend from the fact that Indian Buddhist teachers did not generate Buddhist analogs to the *samskāras*, the caste-specific rites of passage marking stages of life from prenatal to post-mortem condition. Such *naimittika* rituals are a central occupation of *gṛhya* rites, and eventually became a focal concern of Nepalese Buddhism with their adoption of caste.[49] Post-mortem Buddhist observances constituted rites of passage within Buddhist specialization, but that had already developed well before the codification of *dhāraṇī* texts, let alone tantric Buddhism.

In the aggregation of various ritual systems (*homa, bali*) into esoteric Buddhism, a special place was occupied by the local or folk rituals to the spirits, demons, local gods, and a host of

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are archery Veda (*dhanurveda*), elephant Veda (*gajaveda*), horse Veda (*aśvaveda*), etc., to portray fields of understanding and behavior, with texts composed in all of these areas. That nomenclature does not necessitate the implication that these were somehow "brahmanicized" in the manner Sharf describes (Sharf 2017: 85).

[48] These categories are somewhat contested; Lubin 2016 provides a useful discussion of the various sources, including how the Baudhāyana texts multiply the categories.

[49] Indeed, Newar Buddhism can more correctly be described as brahmanized Buddhism and remains a thorny standard of comparison for those proposing Indian esoteric Buddhism for that designation, as esoteric Buddhism in India did not engage in much of what became normative in Nepal. For Nepalese *naimittika* rites, see Lewis 2010 and von Rospatt 2010; for Nepalese *nitya* rites, see Sharkey 2001.

other metaphysical personas (*nāga, yakṣa, yakṣī, rukhadevatā, rākṣasa, piśāca,* etc.), whose rites were primary sources for *bali* rites in the *gṛhyasūtras* in the first place. If the *gṛhyasūtras* contributed many of the procedures to early tantrism, the local spirits provided theological objects, cult sites, and distinctive offerings that were not specified in the *gṛhyasūtras*. Buddhist saṃghas had a lengthy history of involvement with the spirit world, and many of these are invoked in the early documents, such as the *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī*.[50] Some, such as the *yakṣa* Kubera, were in some measure equally appropriated by Śaivas. Other alternative gods, like Saṃvara and Heruka, became mainstays of Buddhist tantrism. Many deities — the feminine *yoginīs*, the *yakṣa* (or *nāga*) Kuṇḍalin or the tribal tree deity Tumburu — were appropriated by both. Few of these appropriations, however, were entirely monopolistic, since the original cult most often retained an independent existence outside of the tantric lineages. We have no evidence, for example, that the many temples to the 64 or 81 *yoginīs* were either constructed by *tāntrika*s or were ever under the exclusive control of tantric traditions, despite the tantric worship of these figures in later texts. The reason for this is simple. Both before and during the periods of tantrism, these cults had their own priests and local groups who generated the deities and sustained their worship. Yet when the appropriation was total, it could be especially effective, as seen in the theology of the best developed personality of tantric Buddhism, the *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi. He made the transition from the position of local spirit and guardian of the Buddha in the early centuries of the common era to a bodhisattva in the Mahāyāna, finally arriving under tantrism at the position of primordial Buddha (*ādibuddha*) in his alter ego of Vajradhara.

Often associated with local cults, rural spirits, tribal gods, and lineage divinities, we find classes of individuals dedicated to magical manipulation of substances and spirits, seeking longevity or immortality, psychic powers, or dominion over celestial or subterranean realms. Variously called sorcerer (*vidyādhara*), hero (*vīra*), perfected ascetic (*siddhatāpasa*), male or female soothsayer (*īkṣaṇika, īkṣaṇikā*), magician (*yātudhana*), sorceress (*vidyādharī*), or witch (*ḍākinī*), they were presumed to have both terrestrial and celestial communities.[51] Some were certainly patterned on tribal or outcaste ritualists, as in the case of the modern Baiga and Sabari sorcerers.[52] Many early tantric Buddhist rites feature these figures as the primary ritual agent, indicating that the Buddhists were emulating their activity, their rituals, their aspirations, and their suppositions. A common trope, for example, is that if one does this or that ritual, he will be surrounded by *vidyādharī*s, whom he must control. If successful, he will be granted the magical sword and hair ornaments of the sorcerers, to become their universal ruler (*vidyā-*

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[50] *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī*, as is well-known, consists almost entirely of the invocation of such spirits. See also the specifics of *yakṣa* cults in the *Āṭānāṭikasūtra* (Hoffmann 1939: 32–79).

[51] Graf 2001; Davidson 2017a.

[52] Sax 2008; Babb 1975: 197–208.

dharacakravartin), and live thousands of years in their realm. Early Buddhist literature — the *sutras /agamas*, *vinaya* and the *Jatakas*— discusses these figures, generally demonstrating how some can be defeated with Buddhist mantras. Alternatively, they are depicted as subject to the law of karma, so that their self-centered activity yields unhappy consequences. Neither early Buddhist nor specifically tantric literature, though, calls into question their supernormal powers, so that they occupy a distinctive place as supreme manipulators of ordinary reality, irrespective of their personal moral valence.

Sectarian rites certainly contributed to Buddhist tantrism as well. The Śaiva emphasis on the power of the symbolic world of charnel and cremation grounds, and their obsession with the ingestion of polluted substances, appear to have been drawn from *yakṣa* and *piśāca* cults — or older *śramana* sources — but was given both a special force and theological architecture in their literary formats that were missing from the spirit cults on which they were based. The Śaiva influence is notable in the late 8th to 11th century literature known as the *yoginī-tantras*, although these texts drew from other sources as well. The old *asura* Saṃvara, for example, had become the god of wandering illusionists (*aindrajālika*), as demonstrated by the character of Saṃvarasiddhi (one whose powers are from Saṃvara) in the playwright Harṣa's 7th-century *Ratnāvalī*. Saṃvara was to become the focus of several Buddhist tantras.[53] Vaiṣṇava influence is marked in the various cosmogonic myths, which tend to recycle the Nārāyaṇa mythologies of epic and early Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavism.

However, one influential, yet under-acknowledged, early source was certainly the solar cults of classical and medieval India. Two of the most important names of the early esoteric Buddhas — Vairocana, Tejorāśi — resonate with the solar identity, which had been a mainstay of both Mahāyānist and even pre-Mahāyānist literature.[54] The solar cults became attenuated in the late medieval period, as was Buddhism itself, but in the late classical and early medieval period, based on the archaeological and epigraphic evidence, they remained an influential movement.[55] The narrative of the *Śuklayajurveda*, for example, maintained that the Vedic mantras were revealed by the sun (Āditya/Sūrya), who infused Yājñavalkya with the goddess Sārasvatī and so the text could be handed down through him.[56]

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[53] *Ratnāvalī* 4.7; Davidson 2017a.

[54] In contrast to the tempter Māra, designated the "dark one" (*kṛṣṇa*), Śākyamuni is the sun, shining like the great light in the sky (*Mahāvastu*. Senart I.164.19 *virocano nabhasi yathā mahāprabho*) and like a thousand suns in the heavens (*Mahāvastu*. Senart II.320.6; Marcioniak II.391.2; *sūryā sahasraṃ yatha antarīkṣe*). Cf. *Varṇārhavarṇastotra* 2.59, 3.1, 3.9, 5.29, etc.

[55] Srivastava 1972, 1996: 67–80 considers the variety and limits of tantric influences.

[56] e.g., *Śāntiparvan* 306: 1–25.

EARLIEST TANTRIC BUDDHIST SYSTEMS: UṢṆĪṢA AND AMOGHAPĀŚA

The transition between the Mahāyānist *dhāraṇī* rituals of the 5ᵗʰ and 6ᵗʰ centuries and the coalescence of Buddhist tantrism in the second half of the 6ᵗʰ or first half of the 7ᵗʰ century happened under something of a veil. What is clear is that during the 6ᵗʰ century, the texts being translated into Chinese had many of the elements of tantrism, including *maṇḍala*s, *mudrā*s, mantras, fire ceremonies, and *abhiṣekas*. But these were often scattered — a *maṇḍala* here, a fire ceremony there, an *abhiṣeka* as a rite of pacification (not initiation) elsewhere, and so forth. In one instance, we find many knitted together into something approaching a whole (**Mūlamantra* T.1007), but no texts of the period reveal any invocation to secrecy, establish distinctive vows (*samaya*), or employ *abhiṣeka* as a rite of initiation. Despite several *dhāraṇī* texts claiming to be 'secret', they were not to be kept secret. Indeed, both the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* (T.1093) and the **Mahādharmadīpadhāraṇīsūtra* (T.1340) — translated by Jñānagupta at the very end of the 6ᵗʰ century — repeat the ancient *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* prohibition against the "teacher's fist": no one is to make the distinction between an inner circle given secrets and a wider group to whom exoteric material is granted.[57] While we gain an appreciation of the wider ritualization of Mahāyānist teaching, the tradition has yet to jump into the esoteric system *per se*.

Our first tantric texts surface in the mid-7ᵗʰ century, with Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* (T.901, translated 654 CE) arguably being the earliest work that brings together all elements of tantrism: a gateway consecration ceremony for candidates (*abhiṣeka*), *maṇḍala*s, mudrās, mantras/*dhāraṇī*s, fire ceremonies (*homa*) in which specific woods are burned, scattered items are offered (*bali*), and the invocation of secrecy to candidates who had entered the *maṇḍala*s.[58] The text focuses on Tejorāśi Śākyamuni, a figure that emerges from the cranial dome (*uṣṇīṣa*) of the Buddha in a remarkable narrative of revelation, and signals the advent of the *Uṣṇīṣa* esoteric texts. Tejorāśi is accompanied by both eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara and Vajragarbha, the latter considered a variety of Vajrapāṇi for the purposes of the text. Each of these two subsidiary figures has a plethora of attendants, who are understood to belong to their families (*parivāra*) and to act as their agents and messengers (*dūta*).

As I have argued elsewhere, tantrism in both its early and subsequent forms is organized around a relatively stable metaphor: the tantric initiate attaining awakening and supreme power

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[57] *Amoghapāśahṛdaya*. Meisezahl 1962: 318–9: *ācāryamuṣṭir na karttavyā* | = T.1093.20.400a27 不自爲已 ; similarly T.1340.21.747a8. Compare *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* §14.14: *na tatrānanda tathāgatasya dharmeṣv ācāryamuṣṭir yaṃ tathāgataḥ praticchādayitavyaṃ manyeta*. The phrase is also found *Gilānasutta* of the *Saṃyuttanikāya* V.152–4; *Dīrghāgama* T.1.1.15b1; *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* T.5.1.164c11-13; T.6.1.180a24–6; *Dīghanikāya* II.99.
[58] Davidson 2012; Shinohara 2014.

in the manner that the feudal lord achieves his position of the overlord.[59] Most of the elements we see in the tantric system become tied in some way to the ideology of feudal dominance, although other metaphors are found along the way: transformation, heroism, rural authenticity, tribal naturalism, purity–pollution, gendered theology, sorcerer's charisma, etc. Such alternative metaphors are grafted onto the political metaphor in most instances, albeit imperfectly. For example, there is the *mantrin* who conquers the *vidyādharas* and becomes their universal emperor. Yet his methods feature magical abilities through the ingestion of substances, the use of rituals or mantras, and his personal heroism facing demonic beings, so that he is eventually surrounded by a court of *vidyādharī* attendants. In all these instances, he conquers by wit and subterfuge in a manner redolent of the trickster protagonists of secular literature. Little wonder that the early esoteric literature was sometimes understood to be part of the *vidyādharapiṭaka*, the sorcerer's basket of books.[60] Nonetheless, the imperial rituals (*abhiṣeka*, *homa*) and the royal emblems (*vajra*, *aṅkuśa*, *mukuṭa*, *paṭṭa*), along with the ideology of the hierarchy of political authority, continued to be the enduring and sustaining factors through the period of tantric Buddhist development.

Arguably, the earliest esoteric Buddhist system, the *Uṣṇīṣa* rites, arose when Mahāyānist masters turned one of these emblems into a ritual corpus. As one of the 32 marks of the 'supreme man' (*puruṣottama*), the cranial dome (*uṣṇīṣa*) had been a fundamental feature of the Buddha's iconography, even if its interpretation varied tremendously.[61] In earlier texts, while the *uṣṇīṣa's* authority was important, the Buddha's miracles would more frequently arise from the tuft of hair between his eyebrows (*ūrṇakośa*) rather than from this odd protuberance. By the period of late classical texts, however, we find an increasing emphasis on the *uṣṇīṣa* as a source of the miraculous, and its iconographic power is reinforced by narratives surrounding it. Even outside Buddhist circles, the contemporary increase in its iconic force becomes signaled by the appropriation of the *uṣṇīṣa* in the images of the Śaiva saint Lakulīśa, whose iconography was developed from earlier Śākyamuni representations, often complete with the 'turning the wheel of the Dharma' gesture (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*).

Yet, in the case of the *Uṣṇīṣa* texts, there seems to be a recognition that the word *uṣṇīṣa*

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[59] Davidson 2002a: 113–44; the argument is a deep structure argument, sometimes misunderstood by specialists.

[60] The parameters of this and related terms are explored in Davidson 2014b.

[61] The rendering of 佛頂 as *uṣṇīṣa* or *Buddhoṣṇīṣa* is not unproblematic, since the two-character combination is used to represent more than one term. However, in Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*, the term is used in the following compounds 烏瑟膩沙 (*tathāgata-uṣṇīṣa*) (T.901.18.786b10–11: 多他揭都烏瑟膩沙), *sarvabuddha-uṣṇīṣa* (796a13: 薩婆菩陀烏瑟膩沙), and *uṣṇīṣa* alone (888c1–2: 烏瑟尼沙). In related texts translated by Bodhiruci II (T.951, T.952), we find *bhagavad-uṣṇīṣa* (皤伽嚩底瑪瑟膩灑). *Yizi foding lunwangjing* 一字佛頂輪王經: T.951.19.256c28, 257a8, 257a18, 257b1, 257b9, 257b16, 257b28, 257c16, 258a2; *Wufoding sanmei tuoluonijing* 五佛頂三昧陀羅尼經:T.952.19.282a23, 283b8, 283b12, 283b16.

further implies the specific qualities of a turban (also designated by the term *uṣṇīṣa*), an item that is fastened onto the head of the prince during the rites of kingship. Over this, the crown (*paṭṭa*) may be set, although there is much variation. Indeed, the wide variety of turban uses in ancient India included turbans employed at the time of royal coronation, at the moment of going into battle, and in the transmission of authority between king and prince. According to the *gṛhyasūtras*, the turban moreover stands as one of the gifts given by a guru to his young student upon the completion of his studies, and it is also an item used in some of the great fire sacrifices (*śrautayajña*) of the brahmanical tradition. In these and many other ways, the turban is an article of clothing consistently mentioned in Sanskrit literature as an emblem of status and power. Such turbans with their crowns (*paṭṭa*) can be seen on bodhisattva and the occasional Buddha images since the classical period, and there is little reason to believe their significance was not well known and thoroughly articulated.[62] The pleonastic nature of these representations — a Buddha with an *uṣṇīṣa* wearing an *uṣṇīṣa* — seems not to have been commented on, and we are not certain that it was even noticed, as the *uṣṇīṣa-lakṣaṇa* was sufficiently codified and widely distributed as an element of the Buddha's embodiment by then, extending even to his family and successors in art (Zin 2003).

The *uṣṇīṣa's* position as an emblem of political dominance is reinforced in the case of the *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* by an episode in the text in which Tejorāśi is revealed as a supreme force in the employment of mantras (*Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* T.901.18.790a–c). In the middle of the first chapter, a relatively innocuous painting description of the Buddha as the 'Golden-wheel universal ruler' turns into a description of a mythological event that is purported to be represented in the painting. In this narrative, the Buddha sits, wearing a crown, surrounded by Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, Mahāprajñā, with the four great kings as a subsidiary *maṇḍala* in the foreground. Around him is a vast retinue of bodhisattvas, those having attained the four paths, gods, *ṛṣi*, demons, and others. Each has accumulated mantras from Buddhas in past lives and now offers them up to the Buddha in a grand cacophony of divine spells, simultaneously recited. Avalokiteśvara intervenes in the form of Hayagrīva, and overpowers all the other mantras, which are suddenly cut off, as if a king exercised dominion over a community of saints. Then the Buddha, out of compassion, emitted a great light from his *uṣṇīṣa*, and from that *uṣṇīṣa* arose Tejorāśi, embraced by sparks of flame. His

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[62] Concerning turbaned bodhisattvas in Gandhāra, see Zwalf 1996/1: 42, 111–13. A basic study of the *uṣṇīṣa* attribute of the Buddha is Coomaraswamy 1938. The transmissibility of the *uṣṇīṣa* iconographic characteristic is discussed in detail by Zin 2003, which is appropriate to any analysis of the process of Buddhist lineage. As extensively considered, the *uṣṇīṣa* should be understood as the cloth underlying the crown on the crowned Buddhas since this is needed for the secure placement of the crown. Hence, every crowned Buddha also has an *uṣṇīṣa*. For crowned Buddhas from the time of Ajaṇṭā, see Krishan 1971 and Twist 2018, and in the instance of the Kabul Shāhīs, Klimburg-Salter 2010. There is undoubtedly much more to be said on crowned and turbaned Buddhas than space here permits.

mouth recites the *Uṣṇīṣa* mantras, great and small, extinguishing Avalokiteśvara's Hayagrīva form. Only the Buddha knew the mantra that could control Tejorāśi, and he reveals this golden-wheel *dhāraṇī* to Avalokiteśvara. The message here is that the incantation of the highest form of universal ruler is the key to thaumaturgical supremacy.

Both within this episode and elsewhere in the *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*, the themes of dominance, kingship, royal entourage, and asymmetrical relationship are reinforced, so that the *Uṣṇīṣa* texts consistently re-orient the Mahāyānist directive to work for the benefit of beings, focusing instead on images of power and authority as the means for accomplishment. Here, it is clear that the benefit of beings is done through the political models of medieval India rather than invoking the other models employed previously in Buddhist texts: mercantile, theological, artisan, and so forth. Certainly, similar political metaphors had been employed previously (the Buddha was understood to be a *kṣatriya*, after all) but they had been but one group in a larger field of metaphors in the rhetorical strategy of the tradition. With the *Uṣṇīṣa* texts, and continuing on through the duration of tantric Buddhism, the political metaphor will become central and primary, either occluding or incorporating others as needed so that the idea of awakening itself became recast as a mode of power (*siddhi*).

By the late 8th century, almost a dozen major *Uṣṇīṣa* and many minor texts had been translated or constituted into Chinese, including some that were later amalgamated into chapters of the *Mañjuśriyamūlakalpa* (T.1181, T.1182). Other *Uṣṇīṣa* texts also found their way into the latter collection, with some other chapters demonstrating an affinity in both vocabulary and ritual focus (*Mañjuśriyamūlakalpa*, Chapters 14, 25–7). Moreover, that so many closely related works — the several versions of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* and the recensions of the *Sarva-durgatipariśodhana* — were also translated makes the record of their popularity appear unassailable. The most important of the *Uṣṇīṣa* texts feature Śākyamuni, Avalokiteśvara, and Vajrapāṇi in some form, with other bodhisattvas and the four great kings of the directions. The *maṇḍala*s are already quite complex, and there is a decided tendency to bleed into the later materials, so that the distinction between *Uṣṇīṣa* texts and subsequent works is sometimes ambiguous.

A different direction was taken by the *Amoghapāśa* materials, featuring the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the guise of a Śaiva (*paśupativeśadhara*), although he is given other forms as well.[63] At least since the 6th century, the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* had been an early protection work, similar to the appendices within the brahmanical domestic manuals (*gṛhyasūtra-pariśiṣṭa*, *vidhāna*). The *Amoghapāśamahākalparāja* builds on the earlier Avalokiteśvara mantra text, but

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[63] *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* D.682, D.901; T.1093–5. Meisezahl 1962: 322.10, 327.5;
Amoghapāśamahākalparāja fols. 26b5, 41a5, 42b1, 45a2, 47b6 etc.

takes it directly into the realm of the sorcerer (*vidyādhara*). There, many dozens of rituals are articulated that employ either the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* or other mantras for the purpose of ensnaring *yakṣas*, *nāginīs*, other spirits, or human beings for the purpose of longevity, power, illumination, and ultimate liberation. Here we find the explicit statement that the *vidyādhara* is a bodhisattva advancing along the path, one who gains soteriological ascension by ritual rather than meditative means.[64] The rites include the manufacture of various kinds of magical nooses (*pāśa*), use of spells and aspersion rituals, ingestion of pills, abuse of images of autochthonous spirits, and manipulation of sorceresses (*vidyādharī*) or demonesses (*yakṣinī*) for the sorcerer's purposes. While such themes eventually matured in the tantras of the late 8th through the 11th century, many of the ideas are found in nascent or related forms, approved here for the first time in Buddhist scriptures.

The geographical source of the *Amoghapāśa* corpus is obscure. Many of its scenes, like those of the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara texts to which they are related, are set on Mount Potalaka, the Buddhist pilgrimage site that was somewhere near the southern tip of the Agastya Malai in south India.[65] That locale, however, was something of a trope in literature by then, even though it is probable that some aspects of the traditions of Potalaka found their way into medieval Buddhist literature. In distinction, the earliest translators of the *Uṣṇīṣa* texts locate themselves in Vajrāsana (Bodhgaya), although Rājagṛha is also featured in some of the materials. Overall, the majority of the sources for early tantric Buddhism appear to be in the north rather than elsewhere; this tends to verify the model that it was the Buddhist difficulties in the cities of the Gangetic valley that led to the social transformation yielding the rise of Buddhist tantrism.

VAJROṢṆĪṢA AND THE MATURATION OF TANTRIC RITUAL

In India, it is unusual for the earliest products of a minority religious movement to become the primary models for all subsequent developments, and that is true of esoteric Buddhist texts as well. As early as the late 7th century, the *Subāhuparipṛcchā* voiced consternation with the problem of the efficacy of early rituals, which were supposed to yield great benefits but failed to do so.[66] We also see a movement towards the synthesis of rituals in the *Sarvamaṇḍalasāmānyavidhīnāṃ Guhyatantram* and the *Susiddhikarasūtra*, laying out grand ritual schematisms, even though they will be altered quickly thereafter. Evidently, the *Uṣṇīṣa* practices were subject to such efforts, and by the early 8th century, a super-category of texts and ritual appeared, the *Vajroṣṇīṣa*, first

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[64] *Amoghapāśamahākalparāja* fol. 50b2–4.

[65] Hikosaka 1989: 119–41 has proposed a location in the Agastya Malai, which requires archaeological verification.

[66] *Subāhuparipṛcchā* D.805, fol. 118a3: *ji ltar sngags rnams 'bras bu ma mchis 'gyur* | .

supplementing and later displacing the *Uṣṇīṣa* rites. The term *vajroṣṇīṣa*, unfortunately, has been incorrectly re-Sanskritized as 'Vajraśekhara' from the Chinese (金剛頂), thereby confusing it with another *Vajraśekharatantra* (D.480) that occurred somewhat later. The Chinese transcription in the mantras, though, does not support such a re-Sanskritization.[67] While I have not seen a definitive explanation of the distinction between *uṣṇīṣa* and *vajroṣṇīṣa*, the placing of *vajra-* as a prefix to names is part of a mythologically established procedure for the Buddhist appropriation of non-Buddhist deities and ritual items, so we may expect that it served as a marker of superiority and esoteric focus.[68]

The representatives of Buddhist tantrism in 8th-century China apparently employed the term *vajroṣṇīṣa* as an omnibus category, expressed most clearly in the 'canon' of 18 texts in a list attributed to Amoghavajra (705–74) in the later 8th century.[69] There we find listed many of the great tantric works of the century, which were only beginning to show up in other lists by authorities in India: the *Guhyasamāja* (D.442; T.885), the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* (D.479; T.865, T.866, T.882), the *Śrīparamādya* (D. 488; T.244), and the *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga* (D.366), to mention just the most important. Some of these texts may certainly have been placed in a *Vajroṣṇīṣa* category in India, but that designation appears to have been somewhat idiosyncratically applied in China. Further, we do not see this category used analogously in works retained in Indic languages or those translated into Tibetan. Indian categories of texts and rituals were generally more fluid than the strong categories employed by Amoghavajra in particular, and we might in any event doubt that there was ever a finite closed *Vajroṣṇīṣa* canon in the way it has been occasionally portrayed.

The *Vajroṣṇīṣa* texts bring to bear new kinds of mythological frameworks, ones in which the Indian world seems a bit more hostile and complex than before. Whereas Tejorāśi simply had to recite a mantra to overcome the thaumaturgical competition, in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*, the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi now has to kill Maheśvara and capture his retinue.[70] Part of this hostility could be attributed to the rise of south India and the Deccan plateau, and the continuing series of invidious raids by rulers in these areas against the north Indian population centers. Another factor was the development of Śaiva narratives of domination, some of which resulted in real actions by kings and local princes. Certainly we see the decline in Buddhist presence in south India at this

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[67] While Giebel 1995: 109 understood that 'Vajraśekhara' was an incorrect rendering of 金剛頂, he elected to avoid the correct form in favor of the received scholarly tradition of Japan. The term *vajroṣṇīṣa* is found in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*: Skorupski 1983: 136, 152, 158, 163, 164, 174.

[68] E.g., *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*: Yamada 1981: 172–3, where Maheśvara and his retinue are re-named with a "vajra" prefix.

[69] *Synopsis of the Yoga of Eighteen Assemblies of the Diamond Pinnacle Scripture* (*Jin gangding jing yu qie shi ba hui zhi gui* 金剛頂經瑜伽十八會指歸) T.869, translated by Giebel 1995.

[70] Davidson 1991; 2002a: 150–2.

time, and find the resonance of the Śaiva threat in the popular medieval perception of Śaiva ascetics as menacing.[71] Other senses of hostility must have come with the overall decline in security, so that Chinese historical records indicate that the late 7th through the 8th century was a particularly unruly period.[72] Little wonder that most tantric deities of every ilk are equipped with weapons (*praharaṇa, śastra, āyudha*) of various varieties; they also are represented as specialists in both defensive protection (*vaśīkaraṇa*) and offensive aggression (*abhicāra*) against enemies. It is unlikely that such features were entirely symbolic in the manner sometimes portrayed in the later interpretive systems, for aggressive symbols can be easily interpreted as licensure to violence.

The *maṇḍala*s espoused in the *Vajroṣṇīṣa* texts and their related ritual manuals became quite large, and the rituals themselves became complex in a manner not seen previously. While *Uṣṇīṣa maṇḍala*s could have as many as 209 Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the majority had far fewer, and it is doubtful if the largest version was ever actually constructed (*Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* T.901.18.897b). Conversely, the *Vajroṣṇīṣa maṇḍala*s could be larger still, with the Vajradhātu maṇḍala abstracted from the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* an example of this process. Selected *maṇḍala* ritual texts associated with the Vajradhātu and Trailokyavijaya systems may describe *maṇḍala*s of 1037 figures each, with at least one associated with the (authentic) *Vajraśekhara* describes 1271 figures.[73] The Japanese Shingon tradition maintains that their Garbhakośa maṇḍala has 414 figures, while their Vajradhātu maṇḍala has 1461 figures. Even outside of the *Vajroṣṇīṣa* corpus, we find in perhaps the 9th–10th century the development of large *maṇḍala*s in works associated with both the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (*Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara*, 219 figures) and the *Ḍākārṇava* (1500 figures). The final phase of esoteric Buddhism, the *Kālacakra*, in its fullest extent featured a 635-figure *maṇḍala*. Given their proportions, it is hard to imagine that these larger *maṇḍala*s were being cultivated as actual meditative events. Indeed, the majority of *maṇḍala*s in all periods were of manageable size, generally between five and 50 figures.

What the *Vajroṣṇīṣa* texts also represent are the greater formalizations of the previously nascent rites of the late 6th to early 7th century. The rituals for the erection of the *maṇḍala* are now accorded a form quite recognizable across texts: preparation of the teacher and student, preparation of the ground, performance of fire ceremonies, erection of the *maṇḍala*, and so forth. Initiation (*abhiṣeka*) into the *maṇḍala* achieves a formalization and level of complexity that draws it nearer to the royal coronation and further away from aspersion as a simple purificatory blessing, so that vajras, crowns, names, and other regal emblems are now featured. The Buddhological

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[71] White 2009.

[72] Davidson 2002a: 42–4.

[73] These numbers reflect the provisional enumeration found in Vira and Chandra 1967 and are in need of further study.

nature of the rites is also given a greater emphasis, and we find various interpretive verses (*paribhāṣa*) in these texts, an element taken over from grammatical and ritual compositions of the classical world. Finally, there emerged a clear understanding of a difference between normative Mahāyānist ritual events and the esoteric ritual system, with the identification of specifically esoteric vows (*samaya, saṃvara*). The *sūtras*, tantras, ritual manuals (*vidhi*) and other ritual works in the rapidly expanding esoteric corpus became increasingly self-conscious in the 8th century, even while traces of the earlier ritual programs were to be found throughout those texts, and despite the unabated composition of Mahāyānist *dhāraṇī* works independent of the esoteric canon.

BUDDHISTS BECOME SIDDHAS AND SIDDHAS RETURN THE FAVOR

One of the more curious occurrences was the development of a new Buddhist sociological form: the *siddha* (perfected). As in the case of the lay *dharmabhāṇaka*, this new form was not uncontroversial nor did it have a single source. Ascetics identified by that designation had been known before, probably first in the case of Jaina monks. Yet the older ascetic (*tāpasa*) with dreadlocks (*jaṭila*), which was recognized in the early canon, also contributed to the Buddhist *siddha* persona. They had been a fixture of Gangetic valley communities and were given accelerated entrance into full *bhikṣu* ordination after four months due to the already close ties between them and the early *saṃgha*.[74] By the 7th century, when we first find mention of dreadlocked Buddhists, that fashion had been more widely adopted, especially by the emergent Śaiva orders. In the Buddhist instance, the locally based sorcerers (*vidyādhara*) further contributed to the development of the Buddhist *siddha* form, which is one reason why the Mantrayāna — as it came to be known — was also designated the 'Sorcerer's Discipline' (*vidyādharasaṃvara*).

Emulating the non-Buddhist public personas, Buddhist *siddhas* in most instances relied on charisma and performance instead of erudition to elicit public interest and support. This was quite a change from the expressed intent of early Buddhism, which maintained that monks were to follow the scriptures, not personalities.[75] With the development of the *siddha* culture, the complete reversal of this formula was evident, so that the tantric preceptor (*vajrācārya*) became the same as the Buddha. Narratives of great feats of devotion were spun to support the ideological position of the charismatic *siddhas*, who were noted for both their contentiousness and their varied social backgrounds. Some were evidently outcaste in origin (e.g., Telopa) while others were either *brāhmans* or were otherwise educated, as in the case of Gayādhara, who was a *kāyastha* (scribal caste). Irrespective of their social background, though, those who achieved status did so by claiming powers (*siddhi*) and by gathering disciples. Because they tended to align themselves with

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[74] *Mahāvagga, Vinaya-piṭaka* I.38.1.

[75] *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* §§ 24.2-3: *bhikṣubhiḥ sūtrāntapratisaraṇair bhavitavyaṃ na pudgalapratisaraṇaiḥ.*

rural or village models of the sage, Buddhist *siddhas* were seldom female; evidence demonstrates that the medieval period saw a marked erosion of women's involvement in Buddhist clerical life. The relatively few Indian female *siddhas* may be contrasted against the greater level of female participation in Tibet in the 11th–12th century.[76]

Based on these trajectories, the *siddha* ritual systems took on a greater license than had been seen previously, with two *abhiṣekas* (*guhya* (secret) and *prajñājñāna* (insight-gnosis)) employing explicit sexual activity. As before, many of the ritual forms were taken from sorcery rituals, sometimes filtered through Śaivism of various kinds, while others were adapted directly from the lore of witches and sorcerers, or focused on *yakṣas* and other local gods, sometimes tribal in nature. Notable was the hermeneutic that such ritual events were 'natural' (*nija*) or 'innate' (*sahaja*) in significance. This was a marked departure from the previous relationships of Buddhists to outcaste, rural, or tribal populations. Whereas Mahāyānists had discussed the son or daughter of good family (*kulaputraḥ kuladuhitā vā*), denoting monied or high-caste households, now the *kula* /family was an innate affiliation of the individual, with a territorially defined family in one of the directions of the *maṇḍala* in service to a central Buddha.

The more extreme Buddhist *siddhas* infused their subculture with eccentric and antinomian behavior. Some, such as Kukurāja / Kukuripā, were said to live with pariah dogs, the most polluted species encountered in daily Indian life. Others like Virūpa (meaning 'ugly' or 'deformed') drank liquor and associated with prostitutes, replicating the older ascetic–prostitute relationship of long Indian vintage. So far as can be told, however, these *siddhas* generally appear similar to the wandering ascetic *sādhus* or *bairāgis* of modern India. They picked up stray bits of lore from various sources, and seem to have had a complicated relationship with other ascetics. They also consorted with thieves and the lower classes that inhabit the periphery of big cities and sites of worship. They travelled to pilgrimage sites, plied their trade in magical rituals, and practiced various forms of meditation that were said to yield liberation. One, the inner heat yoga, while modeled on much older practices, they christened with a curious designation: the outcaste woman (*cāṇḍālī*). The extravagant claims for these rituals (live for thousands of years, journey to the underworld, fly, etc.) continued from the early period through the latest phases of tantrism, and represented an accentuation of the ideology of psychic powers (*ṛddhipāda*) that had already been grudgingly accepted at an early stage in Buddhist institutional life.

The consequences of such behaviors were many, but one stands out as a distinctive Buddhist contribution: the conservation of and composition in vernacular literature forms. Some compositions were employed to frame the ideology of natural understanding (*sahajajñāna*); others

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[76] Davidson 2005: 290–1.

were used as vehicles of criticism of various forms of religious praxis.[77] Still others were autobiographical, pedagogical, ritual, or even humorous and entertaining. With verses in Apabhraṃśa, Prakrit, or Old Bengali, Buddhist *siddhas* expressed their voices in a medium that was closer to what little we know of the true vernacular languages of the early medieval world.[78] The poets certainly took their cues from the expectations of the wider social world: in drama and poetry, Buddhists were expected to speak in Prakrit or similar vernacular languages, but so were women, jesters, and itinerant sorcerers.

In the process of vernacular-based composition, Buddhist authors revisited three early functions that had been occluded in mainstream Mahāyāna. First, they reaffirmed regional languages as vehicles of composition — already recognized in early Buddhist scripture — despite the continued status and authority of Sanskrit. Secondly, they revived the first-person autobiographical voice: not since the verses of the early *arhats* did Buddhists express themselves in such a rich autobiographical first-person form, often playful and not infrequently with pathos. Finally, they expressed themselves through irascible humor and folk images, employing metaphors expressive of a wider variety of life than either elite authors (whose stock of images was rather restricted) or prior Mahāyānist scriptures. Thus, like the *Jātaka* stories, the *Avadānas* in Gāndhārī, and other vernacular-based materials from the early Buddhist traditions, the *siddhas* re-integrated oral forms and meanings into the Buddhist archive that had become obscured in the rush to Sanskrit. One normative Mahāyānist direction they did retain, however, was a trenchant critique of what they saw as 'useless' activities: monastic pomposity, excessive adherence to doctrine, others' religious rituals, and formalized textbook expressions.

Perhaps because of language and behavior, both the form of *siddha* communities and the manner of their acceptance was different from mainstream Buddhist traditions. From the late 8th century on, when they had stable residences, Buddhist *siddhas* tended to live in small concentrations on the periphery of or in proximity to the larger, elite monasteries. So we see 8th and 9th-century esoteric enclaves in Kanheri (the teacher Pālitapāda), the lower Swat valley (Vilāsavajra and Indrabhūti), Śrī-śaila (Nāgabodhi), an unnamed center approximately 25 miles northeast of Vajrāsana (Buddhajñānapāda), Kāṅgra (Jālandharapāda), Dakṣiṇā Kośala (Vairocanavajra), Ujjain (Kukuripāda), Phullahari (Nāropā), Devīkoṭa (Kāṇha), etc.[79] With the modest clues available to us, it appears that the small market towns (*haṭṭa*), isolated villages (*palli*), and local cultic centers (*pīṭha*) remained the sources of tantric Buddhist vitality rather than the elite, sophisticated monasteries.

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[77] Davidson 2002b.

[78] Kvaerne 1977, Jackson 2004, and Stephenson 2020 discuss some of these issues.

[79] For a greater granulation of probable *siddha* sites, see Davidson 2002a: 314.

Hermeneutical Systems and the Intellectual Tantrist

As might be expected, reception of the *siddha* formula was mixed within the larger Buddhist world. The great monasteries of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, and others tolerated them to the degree that they were useful. Yet it would be a mistake to suggest that the large institutions embraced tantric Buddhism entirely, since the antinomian aspects of the specifically *siddha* practices and their agonistic rhetoric were purposefully anti-institutional. Monastery administrators were required to adjudicate between various competing obligations. They had to maintain monastic properties, the primary sources of revenue, as donations from the guilds appear to have diminished at this time and the political winds were not blowing in the Buddhist direction. They had to cultivate the small merchant regional clienteles that were rather conservative and devotionally inclined. And they had to foster a network of associated temples that provided the likely young men who would be the next generation of teachers, administrators, and staff of the monasteries.

At the same time, monastic officials had to acknowledge the attractiveness of the *siddha–vidyādhara* images to many, for there is evidence that people and societies in the midst of the disruption of social bonds are given to magical thinking.[80] The narrative hagiographies, featuring those who did not fit into Indian society, spoke to an everyman populist sensibility. Apabhraṃśa or other vernacular songs proved to be as irresistible then as the similar songs attributed to Kabir, Sūrdas, Mira, and others would appear at a later date, and the Buddhist songs denoted an affinity to a glossia that was inclusive of those outside the norm. Indeed, the continuity of both vernacular poetic expression and technical religious vocabulary between the Buddhist *siddhas* and late medieval *sants* would suggest that they occupied similar social niches as well — neither group fit into the model of respectable religion. To be sure, much of the *siddha* or *vidyādhara* Sanskrit was scarcely comprehensible, *siddhas* assaulted the normative standards of behavior, their rituals were institutionally or personally threatening, and some *siddhas* were either from the dregs of society or clinically insane. But their charisma and the interest that developed around their yogic imagery appeared to beg a sophisticated interpretive response, especially given that some of the yogic instructions (*upadeśa*) of the *siddhas* became in some lineages placed on a par with the tantras themselves.[81]

This problem was not new by any means. Buddhist interpretive systems had been in place since before the time the *Abhidharma* masters had to acknowledge that the Buddha was not being definitive (*lākṣaṇika*) — as they understood the *Abhidharma* to be — but had expressed himself

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[80] E.g., Cana 2015: 213: "In the global sample group, magical ideation is significantly correlated with the reaction to stress (r=.37, p=.00), alienation (r=.30, p=.01), extended consciousness (r=70, p=.00), mysticism (r=.71, p=.00), extended perception (r=.62, p=.00), existential anxiety (r=.55, p=.00), and locus of control (r=.75, p=.00)."

[81] Davidson 2005: 22–60.

with the intention to benefit the congregation (*ābhiprāyika*). A similar opinion was voiced by the Yogācāras in their responses to the Mādhyamikas' understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*): it was an antidote to grasping, not the definitive position. Likewise, various Mahāyānists were motivated to rebut the perception that philosophical nihilism lurked within terms like 'emptiness', or in statements that the world was like a mirage, an illusory city, a bubble, a dream, and so forth.[82] Thus, with little effort, brahmanical opponents could describe the Buddha as a demonic force incarnated to delude the world by the anti-Vedic enticements of the Buddhadharma.[83] As a result, the Mahāyānists began to employ various interpretive systems to defuse the cognitive dissonance resulting from the disparate descriptions of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Insight) scriptures on the one hand and the Yogācāra or Tathāgatagarbha materials on the other.[84]

In tantrism, the process of hermeneutical development was curiously facilitated by the association of some 8th-century *siddhas* with the underclasses of India. Attempting to hide their activities from various authorities — either because of its questionable legality or as an attempt to subvert caste restrictions — families or groups in north India had developed secret signs (*chomā*), deceptive devices that included both verbal codes and physical gestures, neither of which were revealed to outsiders. Moreover, just at this time, tribal peoples speaking indigenous languages became part of the larger Indian world in a manner not seen before, whether because the flight from the large cities yielded migrants into tribal lands or the subsequent decentralization favored the rise of organized tribal groups. At a time when the aura of secrecy was being developed throughout South Asia, both Buddhists and others interpreted the peculiar forms of communication they encountered as emblematic secrecy systems in general. Consequently, there developed a horizon of expectations that antinomian ritual instructions in tantric texts were similarly coded or clandestine and in need of interpretation.

Thus, the tantric hermeneutic strategies were knit together from various strands, the most important of which was the desire to harmonize the older Buddhist forms with the new ritual culture, much as the Mahāyānist authors had wanted to harmonize their own literary expressions with the older culture of their period. In the Buddhist *tāntrika*s' cases, the issue was even more imperative, since the language of the tantras represented a fundamental contradiction to both the core values of the *vinaya* and the public persona of Buddhism overall. So there emerged a series of responses to tantric language by the end of the 8th century that simultaneously represented an interpretation and an implied critique.

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[82] E g., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* II §§ 9–11.

[83] This is one primary function of the *buddhāvatāra*; see Saindon 2004: 28–9 and the Buddhist response in Schneider 2015.

[84] It is fair to say that not all felt the cognitive dissonance. The 'commentary' on the *Mūlamadhya-makakārika* attributed to Asaṅga, which actually comments on only the first two verses of the text, acts as if there is no difficulty: *Shùnzhōnglùn yiru daboreboluomijing* 順中論義入大般若波羅蜜經. T.1565.

In their interpretations, tantric authors applied some of the categories already employed in earlier Buddhist hermeneutics in an attempt to redefine both the sense and the reference of the terms. In this effort, terms or sentences may be definitive (*nītārtha*) or in need of explanation (*neyārtha*); they may be taken as the plain sense (*yathāruta*) or they may not mean what their sense indicates (*na yathāruta*). Consequently, they may intend to express a different term or sense in a coded form (*saṃdhyābhāṣā*) or not. These six possibilities emerged as the 'six horns' (*ṣaṭkoṭikaṃ vyākhyānam*) of interpretation, one of several sets of interpretive strategies developed by the 'Noble school' (Ārya) for the purpose of explaining the *Guhyasamājatantra* and its related literature in the late 8ᵗʰ through 10ᵗʰ century.[85] Their hermeneutical systems were eventually expanded and developed by others in a rapidly accelerating apologia for the tantric materials.

The implied critique suffusing such hermeneutics has seldom been recognized, yet is inherent in the interpretive systems, much as an implied critique suffused some earlier Mahāyānist hermeneutics. The strategy is relatively straight forward. If, as the hermeneutists argue, the language of the tantras is often not to be taken literally, but is some kind of coded, 'twilight language' (as an overarching rubric has been called in modern terms), then those ritualists who perform the practices described in detail in the tantras are mistaken in doing so. This argument has been made at least since the early 9ᵗʰ century in various forms, sometimes articulated as unfolding the 'original intention' of the Buddha in proclaiming the tantras — the erotic or sensuous language was but a method to attract those interested in physical desire so that they may access the path to awakening.[86] In this exegesis, the tantras do not actually recommend the activities they declare. Instead, they are a puzzle to be solved, a body of complex statements that seldom mean what they say, but whose real import is obscure and requires elaborate procedures of interpretation to tease reality out of their coded expressions. Others have argued that it is all imaginary, that the real message is the psychological assault on the mind of the reader / listener, so that the tantras are turned into a series of outrageous propositions that should not be taken at face value.[87]

Such hermeneutics play into the culturally defined Indian supposition that reality is never what it appears; this is part of the reason that there is no agreement by tantric interpreters on what the 'original intention' of the tantras might be.[88] Atiśa (ca. 980–1054), for example, understood

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[85] The intellectual challenge and conceptual architecture of these kinds of hermeneutical systems cannot be effectively subsumed into the Ārya exegesis, as important as it was. For a review of some of these ideas, see Arènes 2002.

[86] These ideas are found as early as the revised version of the *sGra byor bam po gnyis pa*: Panglung 1994: 165, 170.

[87] This is the position of Wedemeyer 2013: 125, who argues that the literal meaning is "close to irrelevant." See my review of his proposals: Davidson 2015.

[88] Péter-Dániel Szántó 2016 has used my typification of the tension between scripture and exegesis as a

that the behavior stated in the later tantras was veridical, and not to be engaged by monks at the expense of their vows. Similarly, we have multiple manuals about the ingestion of various polluting substances, and most received texts provide no hint that these behaviors are not to be taken literally. In the face of such lack of unanimity, a defense of apologetic hermeneutics *per se* invariably becomes the defense of a single hermeneutical tradition at the expense of others and ignores the reality that the tantras had described offensive behaviors for more than a century prior to the arrival of any such hermeneutical systems. Were such hermeneutics essential, we certainly would have encountered similar interpretations in the documents and explanatory texts available during this much earlier period.

The net result of the hermeneutics of Buddhist tantrism was a curious blend of astute scholarship and excessive linguistic parsing of their various meanings. But it did set up an extraordinary development — the tantras became, despite their language and origins, the object of elaborate scholarship. By the 10th century, tantric scholarship had become a legitimate enterprise for Indian monks and lay *siddhas*, with some admitting (like Gayādhara) that they seldom practiced the meditations or yogas found in the actual scriptures at all.[89] In the hands of such men, the texts had become less vehicles of practice than instruments of intellectual virtuosity. Naturally, specific individual works became the object of the majority of the exegetical procedure — the *Laghusaṃvara*, the *Hevajra*, the *Guhyasamāja*, to name the more important — but this did not dissuade others from new tantric compositions.

Indeed, the later period of Buddhist tantrism is marked by the shift from the emphasis on the tantras *per se*, to an emphasis on the oral instructions (*upadeśa*) handed down from iconic teachers through a short line of disciples; perhaps this again represented the outbreak of efforts to subvert the new legitimacy which the tantras had received.[90] Often in such works, slight differences are accorded great gravity under a heavy cloak of secrecy, in a manner similar to trade secrets in other medieval environments. In all such realignments, the position of the charismatic *siddha* reigned supreme, and even those not known as *siddhas* in their lifetimes eventually became so honored as a part of the hagiographic imperative.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

For six centuries, tantric Buddhists developed ritual models that proved to be intrusive into the monastic regimen, supporting some aspects and weakening others, while serving as a bridge to medieval Indian society. The tantric reinterpretation of the Buddhist soteriological paradigm both

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foil, even while largely agreeing with me in the process. There is perhaps an insufficient appreciation of the permeable nature of the categories of *Buddhavacana* and *śāstra*, evident since the *Abhidharma*.

[89] Davidson 2005: 161–209.

[90] This phenomenon is explored in Davidson 2005: 149–60.

reflected the medieval Indian scale of values and acted as an ideological basis facilitating missionary activity outside of India in areas where the ideology of sacral kingship was a long-standing paradigm. Outside of India, it became a vehicle for the distribution of an extraordinary variety of cultural products — linguistics, astrology, medicine, mathematics, law, grand rituals, to name but a few — all contributing to its positive success and reception. Conversely, within India, the model proved much less successful, failing to stem the erosion of the Buddhist footprint. Thus the legacy of tantric Buddhism is somewhat distorted, dominated by non-Indian institutional voices in China, Tibet, Japan and Mongolia. All this begs that the surviving documents and the archaeological legacy be studied thoroughly with increasingly sophisticated historical and linguistic tools. More specifically, some of the forms of textual criticism employed in Biblical or classical studies could be beneficially applied to tantric Buddhist documents.

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Trajectories of Buddhist Monasteries after the Gupta Era:
An Archaeological Survey

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INTRODUCTION

Since Xuanzang's famous 7th-century travelogue mentions the dilapidation of the old monasteries, numerous 'heretic' shrines, and the killing of monks by non-Buddhist rulers, it has been generally agreed that Indian Buddhist monasticism was losing its strong presence in the subcontinent by that time. However, it remains largely unexplored through archaeological and art-historical materials the way in which this decline happened in different parts of the subcontinent and how local *saṃgha*s coped with these changes. A major problem behind this scholarly gap is the fragmentary and incomprehensive nature of such data. Over the course of generations, studies of Indian Buddhist art and archaeology focused on the documentation of sites to address particular kinds of questions, such as the chronology of the monuments and the iconography of the sculptures. The knowledge provided by them is often too specific to be consulted by non-specialists. Since these studies tended to focus on the premier monuments and sculptures from extensive monastic sites, their interpretations have not always proven useful to understanding the less-extensive sites that did not have such 'masterpieces'.

As an attempt to amend such a scholarly lacuna, the art and archaeology group of the VIHĀRA project has developed two projects since 2018: a database of Buddhist monastic sites from the Gupta period (ca. 320–550 CE) onward, and field surveys of the principal monastic sites by regions. Our database thus far lists more than 300 sites of Buddhist monastic remains with metadata, such as GIS location, date, excavated remains, artifacts, and references. To examine the regional development of Buddhist monasteries, our field surveys covered not only the strong footholds of Buddhism in the post-Gupta period, such as Bihar and Odisha, but also the peripheral regions including Andhradeśa (current states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), North Konkan (Maharashtra), western Malwa (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan), and southern Kosala (Chhattisgarh).

Based on the materials collected through this fieldwork, this chapter will present some tentative observations on the transformation of Buddhist monasteries in the late Gupta and post-

Gupta periods, dated to between the late 5th and 8th century CE. This discussion consists of two sections. By combining quantitative analysis of the archaeological data with epigraphic, textual, and art-historical evidence, the first section provides a brief overview of the chronological development of Buddhist monasteries in different parts of the subcontinent, between the 3rd century BCE and 7th–8th centuries CE. Based on the field surveys, the second section will highlight some hitherto unnoticed features of the Buddhist monasteries in the post-Gupta period and their implications.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN BUDDHIST MONASTERIES

Early Period

Despite the existence of textual references to several monasteries at the time of the Buddha, the extant Buddhist architectural record does not reveal any structure that can be dated prior to the Maurya period (ca. 3rd century BCE).[1] As the earliest structures are, with little exception, *stūpa*s, it is unclear what kind of residential architecture (*vihāra*s) monks lived in during this period.[2] The obscure nature of early monastic architecture contrasts with the material evidence from the post-Maurya period (ca. 2nd–1st centuries BCE). Based on collective patronage, particularly of urban elites, this period saw the significant growth of Buddhist monastic sites, especially in the lower Krishna valley of coastal Andhra and the north Konkan of the western Deccan (Heitzman 1984: 131). Early rock-cut monasteries of the Deccan created in this period also provide evidence of the general layout of Buddhist monasteries consisting of several *vihāra*s and at least one *stūpa*. In the subsequent Kuṣān–Sātavāhana periods (ca. 1st–3rd centuries CE), the construction of Buddhist monasteries further developed in coastal Andhra, the western Deccan, and parts of the northwest such as Gandhāra and its surroundings (Heitzman 1984: 131). Unlike the earliest *vihāra*s, some *vihāra*s of this period created space for worship inside the buildings. *Vihāra*s with a rectangular courtyard surrounded by monastic cells became a standard architectural type in the Deccan, the Gangetic valley, and Taxila in the northwestern region (**Fig. 1**).[3] Additional components of

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[1] As for the dating of the earliest Buddhist sites, see Härtel 1991–2. A recent archaeological discovery that may revise this dating is Lumbini. Excavations by Durham University revealed the trait of the wooden railing at the earliest level of the Māyādevī temple there. The excavation dated the structural activity to the 6th century BCE. See Coningham et. al. 2013; UNESCO 2013: 81.

[2] Since Sanchi and its neighboring sites in Vidisha preserve a good number of rock-shelters surrounding the *stūpa*s, the earliest monasteries may have consisted of *stūpa*s and simple monastic residences with natural and perishable materials (Shaw 2007: 87). Similar rock shelters with early inscriptions were also found in several monastic sites in Sri Lanka (Bandaranayake 2009: 23).

[3] There are local variations in this type of *vihāra*s. In the western Deccan, they have pillared verandahs that open onto the courtyards and cells. Contemporary *vihāra*s in Andhra do not have such verandahs. Rows of monastic cells surrounding the courtyard do not connect at their ends. In the northwestern region, the *vihāra*s in Taxila closed the courtyard with cells on all four sides. One could enter the *vihāra*s

monastic buildings, such as pillared halls (*maṇḍapa*), kitchens, refectories, and bathrooms, also appeared in the monasteries.[4] The archaeological evidence thus shows a continuous development of Indian Buddhist monasteries until the 3rd century CE. Since there are few examples of non-Buddhist religious architecture in this period, Buddhist *stūpa*s and *vihāra*s most likely dominated the religious landscape of the subcontinent.

Regional Developments after the 3rd century CE

Deccan

When the rule of the Sātavāhanas declined in the first half of the 3rd century CE, Buddhist construction work seems to have declined in the western Deccan. After the completion of the great *caitya* at Kanheri in the last quarter of the 2nd century CE during the reign of Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi, construction of rock-cut monasteries in the region seems to have ceased, with some possible exceptions.[5] Epigraphic sources provide little information on the patronage of Buddhism in the western territory by the successors of the Sātavāhanas.[6] The region witnessed a resurgence of

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from the main entrance only (Kuwayama 1990: 20–1, Kuwayama 2002: 4). However, this type of *vihāra* was not universally accepted all over the subcontinent. There are a few examples of this type in Gandhāra to the west of Taxila (Kuwayama 1990: 24–5). Only a small number of examples is known in Sri Lanka, such as the so-called hospital monastery in Mihintale (Bandaranayake 2009: 251).

[4] Archaeological evidence of such buildings has been found mainly in Andhra and the northwestern region around Gandhāra. Early Buddhist monasteries in Andhra often had the pillared halls built either inside or outside of the monasteries. Thotlakonda, Bavikonda, Salihundam, and Phanigiri of the same region yielded structures identified as congregation halls, kitchens, storerooms, and refectories (Subrahmanyan 1964: 30; Krishna Sastry, Subrahmanyan, and Rama Krishna Rao 1992: 48–55, Figs 3, 11, 12; Prasad 1994: 28–33, Figs 4, 10–13), although the basis of such identification is often not well grounded. A monastic complex at Nagarjunakonda (Site 3) had a bathroom, as the excavation uncovered a urinal connected with a drain (Soundara Rajan 2006: 166–70, Fig. 42). In the northwestern region, Marshall's excavations at Taxila found large rooms attached to the *vihāra*s. The excavator identified them as bathrooms, kitchens, refectories, and storerooms. See Marshall 1951: 343, Pl. 82a (Giri); 362, Pl. 93 (Morha Moradu); 365, Pl. 98 (Pippala), 382–83, Pl. 101 (Jaulian); 394–95, Pl. 113 (Bhamala).

[5] Dhavalikar (1984) has argued that a small group of rock-cut *vihāra*s in the western Deccan, such as Kuda, Mahad, and Karad, could be dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries CE because they have *stūpa* shrines on the back wall of the *vihāra*s and are thus closer to the Gupta-style *vihāra*s in terms of their architectural style. Since these caves were damaged and have limited epigraphic and art-historical data, there is little scholarly agreement on the chronology of these caves. For example, Vidya Dehejia has proposed earlier dates for these caves (Dehejia 1972: 178–9, 182–3).

[6] While the Western Kṣatrapas supported the *saṃgha*s in northern Konkan in the late 1st century CE (as attested by Nasik and Karla inscriptions), it is unclear if they supported Buddhism after the 3rd century. The only epigraphic evidence is an endowment by Viṣṇudatā, the daughter of the Śaka king Agnivarman, to Nasik (Cave 10). See Tsukamoto 1996: Nasik, no. 16, and Shimada 2018: 483, Fig. 5. The Banavasi area of northern Karnataka (southwestern edge of the Sātavāhana territory) yielded epigraphic and archaeological evidence of Buddhist construction activities during the Sātavāhana period (Tsukamoto 1996: Banavasi no. 1; Suvrathan 2014: 207–9). The epigraphic corpus of the Kadambas (345–525 CE) — the successor of the Sātavāhanas in the Banavasi area — testifies the royal construction of Jain and Brahmanical temples but *not* Buddhist monasteries. According to Gai's epigraphic survey of the early Kadambas that succeeded the Sātavāhanas in the Banavasi area, only two of the 44 donative inscriptions
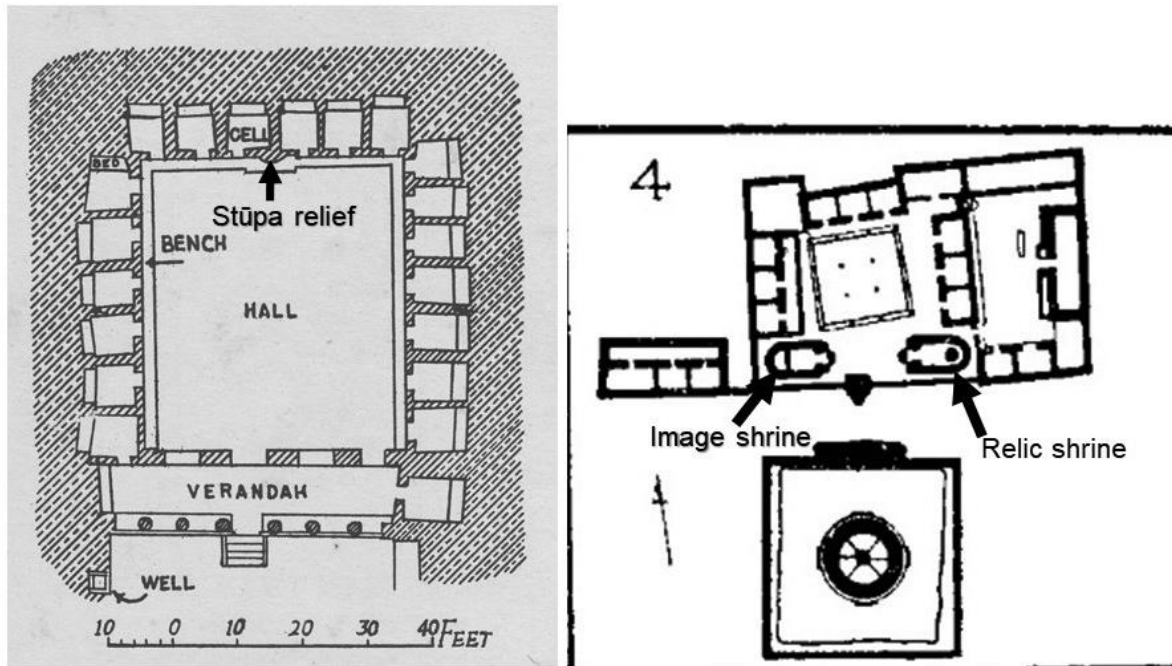
FIG. 1 Plans of early *vihāra*s.
Left: Cave 3, Nasik, ca. late 1st century CE.
Right. Site 4, Nagarjunakonda, ca. late 3rd century CE.
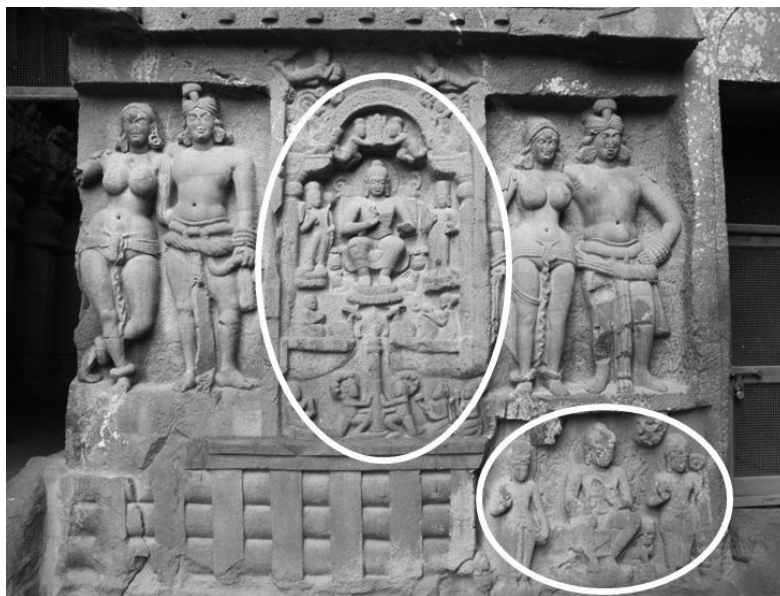(after Mitra 1971: Fig. 6 and Sarkar 1993: Pl. XIII)

FIG. 2
Buddha and attendants
Karla, ca. 6th century CE.
Photo: author

of the dynasty were Buddhist (Gai 1996: Nos 19, 26). Compared to the donations to Brahmanical religion (28) and Jainism (12), the support to Buddhism seems to have been limited (Gai 1996: 48, 50).

Buddhist construction activity after the late 5th century under the patronage of the Vākāṭakas and their successors, which continued sporadically until the 8–9th centuries CE. Compared to the early period of construction, the sites that exhibit large-scale construction work in this period are rather limited, such as Ajanta, Aurangabad, Bagh, Kanheri, Ellora, and Nasik.[7] Besides Kanheri (*see* Brancaccio's chapter in this volume on this site), there are no monasteries that show a continuation of monastic activities throughout the 5th to the 9th century CE. More commonly, Buddha and bodhisattva images carved or painted on early rock-cut *vihāra*s and *caitya*s provide the only evidence to show the continuation of patronage activity at the monasteries (Fig. 2). According to Walter Spink, these images were unsystematic intrusions created around the 6th century CE by individual donors. This indicates that the monasteries were no longer properly maintained or already desolate because of the lack of attentive patronage.[8]

Even with the decline of the Sātavāhanas's rule in the early 3rd century CE, vigorous Buddhist construction work continued in the Andhra region of the eastern Deccan until the early 4th century CE, particularly at Amaravati/Dhānyakaṭaka, the capital of the Sātavāhanas, and Nagarjunakonda/Vijayapurī, the new capital of the Ikṣvākus. On the other hand, a set of copper-plate grants from Pātagaṇḍigūden in West Godavari district records the "broken and shattered" (*khaṇḍa-pulla*; Pāli: khaṇḍa-phulla*) condition of a *mahāvihāra* at Pithuṇḍa, in addition to a donation of a residential building and a plot of land by Ehavala Cāntamula, the third king of the Ikṣvākus (Falk 1999–2000: 275–83).[9] Although the inscription does not mention the reason for the dilapidation, it indicates the critical condition of this unidentified monastery in coastal Andhra in the late 3rd century CE.[10] It is also important to note that the Buddhist monasteries at Nagarjunakonda/Vijayapurī were built by a limited number of patrons associated with the Ikṣvāku royal family (Shimada 2013a: 203). The collective patronage that supported the Buddhist construction work of this region since the 2nd century BCE may thus have declined during the Ikṣvāku period. After the demise of the Ikṣvākus in the early 4th century, the decline of the monastic construction work in Andhra becomes apparent, particularly in the lower Krishna valley. Out of more than 80 monastic sites documented in the modern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, only a few yield material evidence of major construction activity and artistic production after the late 4th century CE, such as Amaravati, Guntupalli, Karukonda, Salihundam, and Sankaram.[11] Like

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[7] Ghatotkach could be added to this list, although the site has only one unfinished *vihāra*. See Fergusson and Burgess 1988: 346–7.

[8] Spink 2005. For the donors of these images and their possible connection with Mahāyāna Buddhism, see Schopen 2005: 223–46 and Morrissey 2013.

[9] As for the date of the Ehavala Cāmtamūla, see Stone 1994: 4–9.

[10] See Falk 1999–2000: 281–2 for the identification of Pithuṇḍa.

[11] See Barrett 1954 (Amaravati), Shimada 2013b (Guntupalli), Chandra Reddy 1988 (Karukonda), Rea

the western Deccan, a more common type of evidence indicating the later continuation of Buddhist sites in Andhra is the stone and bronze sculptures of the Buddha and bodhisattvas.[12] Besides the groups of sculptures from Amaravati, the examples are few and sporadic. Other than Amaravati, the sites that continued construction activity were concentrated on the north of the lower Krishna valley, particularly in the Vengi region and southern Kalinga. This shows a broad correspondence with the political geography of post-Ikṣvāku Andhra. While this period saw the rise of small Hindu dynasties until the foundation of the Eastern Cālukyas in the early 7th century CE, those that supported Buddhism (i.e., Sālaṅkāyanas (4–5th century CE) and Viṣṇukuṇḍins (5–7th century CE) were based in the Veṅgī region.[13] This most likely reduced the importance of the lower Krishna valley as the political and economic center and exerted a devastating blow to the Buddhist monasteries concentrated in the valley. It is also notable that the earliest archaeological evidence of Buddhism in Tamil Nadu — the monastic complex at Pallavanesvaram/ Kaveripattinam — was founded around this period (ca. 4–5th century CE), with their excavated sculptures show a strong influence from Andhra (Schalk 2002: 129–33, 430–6). This indicates that the legacy of Andhra Buddhism, long established in the lower Krishna valley, moved into the surrounding regions due to its decline in the homeland.

Northern India

From around the 3rd century CE, northern India also experienced a similar change in political geography due to the decline of the Kuṣān Empire. The change appears to have affected the construction activities of Buddhist monasteries in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE. Mathura, the most important artistic center in the Gangetic valley from the 2nd century BCE and a political center of the Kuṣāns, saw a profound decrease in the number of dated Buddhist sculptures produced after the reign of Vāsudeva in the early 3rd century CE. There is no Buddhist, Jain, or Brahmanical sculpture securely dated to between the first and the third quarter of the 4th century CE from Mathura (Rosenfield 1967: Appendix III, Chart 1). Although located in the periphery of the Kuṣān Empire, excavations at Gotihawa and Piprahwa in ancient Kapilavastu reveal the abandonment of monasteries even before the 4th century CE (Verardi 2011: 138; Srivatsava 1996; Falk 2013: 58). An important exception to this phenomenon is Gandhāra and its surroundings, another important

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1907–8 (Sankaram), and Subrahmanyan 1964 (Salihundam).

[12] See Barrett 1954 (Amaravati), Burgess 1887 (Jaggayyapeta), Kuraishi 1926–7 (Gummadidurru), Chandra Reddy 2008 (Nelakondapalli), and Sewell 1895 (Buddham). While these sculptures are dated roughly to the 6th–8th centuries CE, Amaravati yielded further later sculptures dated to the 10–12th centuries CE, including an image of Heruka. See Gupta 2008: Pl. 69.

[13] For the dynastic chronology of Sālaṅkāyana and Viṣṇukuṇḍins, see Francis (forthcoming) and Sankaranarayanan 1977. For their patronage of Buddhism, see Sanderson 2009: 70–2 and Tournier 2018: 20–46.

artistic as well as political center of the Kuṣāns. Although a detailed chronology of Gandhāra art and architecture is yet to be well-established, archaeological surveys of the surrounding areas, such as Taxila and Swat, provide evidence of continued Buddhist construction work into the 3rd and 4th centuries CE and even later.[14] According to Kuwayama (1990: 35–67), Chinese records of monks travelling in the 4th and 5th century CE also indicate the flowering of Gandhāra as a Buddhist center.

As indicated by the continuation of Buddhist activity in Gandhāra, the 4th-century crisis that hit the Deccan hard did not cause a lasting impact on most Buddhist monasteries in the northern portions of the subcontinent. Faxian's travel account at the beginning of the 5th century CE describes 30 Buddhist sites from the south of the Pamirs to the Gangetic valley. While he mentions the dilapidation of a few cities and associated monasteries, such as Kapilavastu and Rājagṛha,[15] most monasteries generally seem to have been in good shape. Particularly praised in his account were the flowering monasteries and relic worship in Gandhāra and its surroundings, the prosperity of Mathura with some 20 monasteries and 3000 monks, Pāṭaliputra whose monasteries attracted many Buddhist scholars including himself, and Tāmralipti in Bengal where Faxian stayed for two years before leaving India.[16] As discussed in Deeg's chapter in this volume, taking these accounts as the accurate descriptions of each place is problematic.[17] Generally speaking, however, the archaeological data seem to correspond with Faxian's account. A good number of stucco sculptures found at Taxila indicate the continuation of artistic production in this new medium in the 5th century CE (Marshall 1951: 75, 514–15, 520–32). Mathura resumed Buddhist and non-Buddhist artistic production around the last quarter of the 4th century CE and reached its stylistic zenith in the second quarter of the 5th century CE, as attested by dated sculptures (Williams 1982: 67–73). A dated Mathura sculpture found at the Mahābodhi temple in Bodhgaya also indicates substantial renovation work in that location in the last quarter of the 4th century CE (Willis 2016: 193). Excavations at Lumbini in 1984–5 revealed a substantial refurbishment of *vihāra*s, *stūpa*s, and the Māyādevī temples during the 5–7th centuries CE (Mishra 1996: 42; UNESCO 2013: 90–1). At Kasia, identified as ancient Kusinagara, the main *stūpa* and the Nirvāṇa temple were fully renovated around the 5th century CE, as attested by a copperplate inscription found inside the *stūpa* and

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[14] For Taxila, see Kuwayama 1974; 1990: 1–32; 2002: 1–11. For Swat, see Faccena 1980–1: 629–36.

[15] Kapilavastu: T.2085.51.0861a22–0861a23 and Nagasawa 1996: 67–8; Rājagṛha: T.2085.51.0862c19, 0862c27–0862c28 and Nagasawa 1996: 85–91.

[16] Gandhāra, Taxila, Puruṣapura, Nagarahāra: T2085.51.0858b03–0859a11 and Nagasawa 1996: 30–43; Mathura: T.2085.51.0859a22–0859a26 and Nagasawa 1996: 44; Pāṭaliputra: T.2085.51.0862a20–0862c03, 0864b16–0864c04 and Nagasawa 1996: 81–5, 105–7; Tamralipti: T.2085.51.0864c04–0864c09 and Nagasawa 1996: 108.

[17] Also see Deeg 2007.

an inscription carved on the pedestal of the colossal image of the Parinirvāṇa (Patil 1981: 18, 20; Tsukamoto 1996: Kasia, nos. 1, 125). According to Debala Mitra, Sarnath saw "a phenomenal spurt in the sculptural and structural activity" in the 5th and 6th centuries CE, such as the refurbishment of the two large *stūpa*s (Dharmarājikā and Damekh), the construction of the main shrine identified as *mūlagandhakuṭī* and the foundation of a large *vihāra* (Monastery V), as well as the production of abundant stone sculptures with a distinct style.[18] Another significant phenomenon that indicates the resilience of Buddhism in the Gupta period is the establishment of large monasteries in areas where the presence of Buddhism had been obscure in the early centuries CE, such as Gujarat (Devni Mori), Sind (Mirpur Khas), Kashmir (Harwan), and Bengal (Tamralipti).[19]

Our survey indicates that the crucial turning point for Buddhist monasticism in northern India was the 6–7th centuries CE as a substantial number of older monastic centers seem to have declined in this period, including Gandhāra, Taxila, Mathura, Pāṭaliputra, and Kauśāmbī.[20] This was the period when the Gupta Empire had become fragmented into regional dynasties after the military campaigns of the Alchon Huns. After consolidating their presence in the Punjab by the first half of the 5th century CE, the Huns started a territorial expansion into the Ganga-Yamuna valley, Malwa, and Saurashtra at the end of the 5th century. This was undertaken primarily under the powerful rulers Toramāṇa and his son, Mihirakula.[21] Due to the Guptas' failure to halt their expansion, the Huns' campaigns continued until Mihirakula's defeat by King Yaśodharman of

[18] Mitra 1971: 67. As noted by Williams (1982: 80), however, the excavated remains, particularly that of the main temple, were fragmentary and were incorporated into later buildings. The chronology of the building thus is still open to questions. Verardi (2011: 417–35) even suggests that some of these construction works were done by the Brahmanical community.

[19] For Devni Mori, see Mehta and Chowdhary 1966; Hinüber 1985: 196–7; Tsukamoto 1996: Devni Morī, no. 1. For Mirpur Khas, see Cousens 1909–10. For Harwan, see Mitra 1971: 111. A seal inscription from Intwa indicates the presence of the Buddhist monastery around the 2nd century CE in western Gujarat (Tstukamoto 1996: Inṭwā, no. 1). Recent excavations at Vadnagar in northeastern Gujarat revealed possible remains of Buddhist monastery, dated to between the 2nd and 7th century CE (Rawat 2011). Despite the Faxian's description of the monasteries (T2085.51.0864c04–0864c09 and Nagasawa 1996: 108), archaeological surveys do not find Buddhist sites before the Gupta period in Bengal. While Tamluk in West Bengal is commonly identified as Tamralipti, excavations did not confirm objects associated with Buddhism there; see Ramachandran 1951.

[20] See Xuanzang's account of Taxila (T.2087.51.0884b28–0884c04; Mizutani 1971: 113), Gandhāra (T.2087.51.0879b23–0879c02; Mizutani 1971: 81), Mathurā (T.2087.51.0890a28–0890b05; Mizutani 1971: 144); Kauśāmbī (T.2087.51.0898a03–0898a04; Mizutani 1971: 178) and Pāṭaliputra (T.2087.51.0910c15; Mizutani 1971: 243). Also see Kuwayama 1990: Ch. 2 (Gandhāra); Altekar and Mishra 1959: 48–54 (Pāṭaliputra), G.R. Sharma 1958 (Kauśāmbī), and R.C. Sharma 1995: 88–90 (Mathurā). The clearest discrepancy between the textual account and archaeological data is Mathurā. While Xuanzang mentions the presence of some 20 monasteries with 2000 monks at Mathurā, Buddhist construction and artistic activity at Mathura after the 6th century CE is not attested; see Deeg 2007.

[21] For the Guptas' attempts to check the Hunnic expansion in the mid-5th century CE, see the Junagarh and Bhitari inscriptions in Chhabra and Gai 1981: 296–305 (no. 28), 312–17 (no. 31).

Aulikaras around 532 CE.[22]

Although the Alchon's presence in these areas waned after Mihirakula, the Gupta imperial system did not recommence and instead was replaced with several regional dynasties. Because a few Chinese and Sanskrit sources mention Mihirakula as a cruel persecutor of Buddhism, early scholars like John Marshall assumed that the rule of the Huns caused the immediate destruction of Buddhist monasteries, as they were "carrying ruins and desolation wherever they went".[23] Recent studies have effectively revised this view by pointing out the continuing presence of Buddhism under the rule of Huns (Kuwayama 1990; Bakker 2018). They instead argue that there was a relationship between the downward trajectory of Buddhist monasteries and the long-term consequence of the Hunnic campaigns which enhanced significant changes in the political, economic, and religious landscape of northern India in the 6th century CE. The downfall of the Gupta Empire, for example, led to the desolation of Pāṭaliputra, the old capital of the Mauryas and Guptas. According to Xuanzang, the city had not recovered even by the early 7th century.[24] A city in such a poor economic condition could no longer support the monasteries. This is further indicated by the Kumrahar excavations in Patna (the contemporary name for Pāṭaliputra) that dated the abandonment of Buddhist monasteries there to before the 7th century (Altekar and Mishra 1959: 48–54). The fragmentary and fluctuating political conditions also influenced the commercial networks with which Buddhist monasteries had established symbiotic relationships. According to Kuwayama, the downfall of Gandhāra as a major Buddhist center occurred not because of the Alchon's control of the region but rather after they lost control of the region in the mid-6th century CE. Their departure caused a shift of the main route connecting India and Central Asia, shifting from passing the western side of the Karakorum to passing the west of the Hindu Kush (Kuwayama 1990: 93–162).

As exemplified by changing religious beliefs of the Hunnic rulers — sympathetic to Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism in the early period but later allied with Śaivism during the reign of Mihirakula — the unstable political conditions and successive warfare after the late 5th century CE led rulers to worship powerful deities who offered protection for themselves and their kingdoms (Bakker 2017). Regional rulers who claimed control of Gupta territory also authorized their rule by emphasizing their support of the Brahmanical social order (*varnāśramadharma)* and their

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[22] Balough 2019: A10 (http://siddham.uk/inscription/IN00097), A11 (http://siddham.uk/inscription/IN00094).

[23] Marshall 1951: 76. As for the textural references of Mihirakula's persecution of Buddhism, see *Liánhuá miàn jīng* 蓮華面経 (T. 386, 12.1075c06f); *Fù fǎzàng yīnyuán zhuàn* 付法藏因縁 (T. 2058. 50.0321c15f); *Dà Táng xīyù jì* 大唐西域記 (T.2087.51.0888b25f); Mizutani 1971: 136–7 [4.1.2]; Stein 1900: 43 (I, 289–90).

[24] T2087.51.0910c15; Mizutani 1971: 243.

devotion to Hindu gods through donative acts and rituals (Sanderson 2009: 41). While this situation caused the downfall of old political and economic centers that embraced Buddhism, it enhanced the formation of new political, economic, and religious centers associated with the regional dynasties that emerged in the 6–8th centuries CE. As these Hindu dynasties were generally supportive of Buddhist *saṃgha*s, new monasteries were built in their core ruling areas. A particularly notable example is Varabhi in Gujarat which developed into a famous Mahāyāna Buddhist center in the 6–7th century CE under the patronage of the Maitrakas, although the kings in the donative inscriptions identified themselves as devotees of Śiva or *paramamaheśvara* (Sanderson 2009: 44, 72–3).

To compete with Vedic brahmins and sectarian Hinduism that provided rulers with gaining their semi-divine statues through rituals, some monasteries in this period developed Tantric rituals, although their origin is still highly contested among scholars (*see* Davidson's chapter in this volume). Buddhist competition with local *brāhmaṇa*s and Hindu temples for royal support seems to have been fierce. According to the study of Schmiedchen, for example, of the more than 100 copper plate charters of the Maitrakas, 70% record gifts to brahmins, whereas only 25% are in favor of Buddhism. While there is no record of any royal grants to a Buddhist monastery after 675 CE, grants to brahmins continued until the end of the dynasty in the 8th century CE (Schmiedchen 2019: 205–6). This increasingly challenging financial condition most likely affected the stability of many monasteries, aside from a few exceptionally large ones which still enjoyed exceptional support from rulers and international Buddhist communities due to their reputation in the wider Buddhist world.

FEATURES OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES AFTER THE GUPTA ERA

This brings us to our next question. In such a new and increasingly challenging environment, how did Buddhist monasteries change during the post-Gupta period? As mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, traditional studies of Indian art and archaeology addressed this question by focusing on large monasteries like Nalanda and Ratnagiri, highlighting key features, such as the architecture of the magnificent *vihāra*s as well as the complex and innovative iconography of the ever-vast pantheon of iconic sculpture. However, these features may not apply to a wide variety of smaller monasteries whose existence was more vulnerable to changes in local political, economic, and religious conditions. Consequently, investigating the features of such smaller monasteries should increase our knowledge of Buddhist monasticism in the early medieval period and thus enhance scholarly discussions. With that in mind, our fieldwork and archival studies have paid special attention to relatively unstudied sites in the 'peripheral' areas of Indian Buddhism from the Gupta period onward, i.e., the Deccan, western Malwa, and southern Kosala. The results can be summarized as follows.

Expansion of the Abode of the Buddha

One of the distinct features of Buddhist monasteries from the Gupta period is the omnipresence of the Buddha. Because of the acceptance of the Buddha image as a cultic object and the concomitant enshrinement of cultic objects within the *vihāra*s in the early centuries CE, various ways of venerating the Buddha in the different architectural context of monasteries were already prevalent by the Gupta period.[25] In the Gupta period, this phenomenon was manifested by the installment of a large Buddha image in the central cell in the back wall of *vihāra*s **(Fig. 3)**. Epigraphic evidence shows that such cells were created as *gandhakuṭī*s, a special residence (*veśman*) of the living Buddha who is represented by the Buddha image (Schopen 1997: 258–89).

This treatment of images as the living Buddha not only affected the plan and decoration of the *vihāra*s, but also of *stūpa*s. As noted by Schopen, excavations found several *stūpa*s of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods that contained broken Buddha images, buried most likely as relics of the 'dead' Buddha (Schopen 1997: 276–7). Other *stūpa*s of the same period also contained the unbroken/living Buddha images such as the one at the Devni Mori in Gujarat. This *stūpa*, founded around the late 4th century CE and renovated in the 5–6th centuries CE, included two groups of terracotta Buddha images and three relic caskets from different levels of the central axis.[26] The first group consisted of eight seated Buddhas placed above a relic casket at the bottom level of the *stūpa*. In the second group, a seated Buddha, facing east, was placed above another relic casket in the upper level of the dome.[27] A similar set of bronze images was found at the Sopara *stūpa* in Maharashtra. These images, consisting of the seven Buddhas of the past and Maitreya dating to 7–8th century CE, were found with a copper relic casket in a stone coffer in the central chamber of the *stūpa* (Indraj 1881–2; Desai 2013). The images in the coffer were carefully placed surrounding the relic casket at the center. Such a systematic arrangement of images within the proximity of relic caskets suggest that they were not simply deposits of luxurious bronze images but were deemed as living entities residing in the *stūpa*, whose "living" status was further assured by corporeal relics. A more explicit attempt to emphasize the physical presence of the Buddha in the *stūpa*s by using the power of images is seen at Ellora Cave 10 where a large-seated Buddha was placed in front of the *stūpa*.

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[25] In addition to the corporeal relic and the Buddha images, this period also saw the establishment of sacred texts as a relic. See Boucher 1991 and Salomon 1999: 84–5.

[26] See Mehta and Chowdhary 1966: 27–31 and van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1975: 164–8 regarding the chronology of the *stūpa*. I thank Dr. Brancaccio for sharing the latter article.

[27] Mehta and Chowdhary 1966: 45–61, Fig. 15. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw (1975: 168) argued that the images were placed inside the *stūpa* during the later reconstruction of the monument because they had been damaged. However, when one examines the published pictures of the excavation, it appears that the images were carefully placed inside the *stūpa*s and were in fact mostly intact (Mehta and Chowdhary 1966: Pls 13, 16B, 16C).
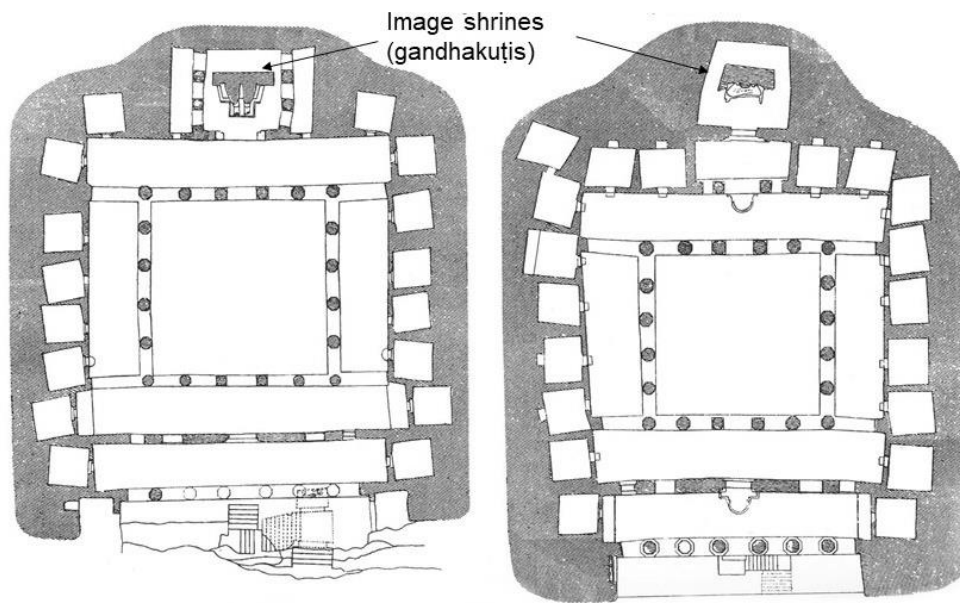
Image shrines (gandhakuṭis)

FIG. 3 Plans of Caves 16 (left) and 17 (right), Ajanta
ca. late 5th century CE.
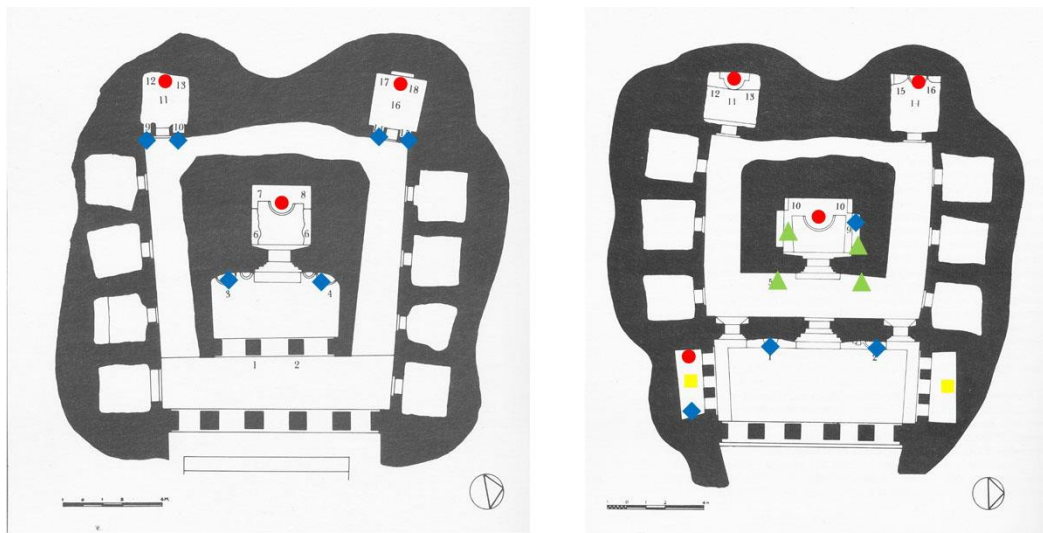(After Fergusson and Burgess 1880: Pl. XXXIII)

FIG. 4
Plans of Caves 6 (left) and 7 (right), Aurangabad
ca. 6–7th century CE.
(Modified after Berkson 1986: 102, 174)

● Buddha with two attendants/ Bodhisattvas
◆ Attendants/Bodhisattvas ▲ Female deities/Bodhisattvas
■ Other deities

Transformation of the Monasteries as the Abode of the Buddha

Along with the increased visibility of the 'living' Buddha promoted by the installation of images in *vihāra*s and *stūpa*s, efforts to make the monasteries a proper living space for the Buddha also developed in this period. In contrast to the early *vihāra*s with their simple interior decoration, the Gupta-style *vihāra*s were richly embellished with sculptures and paintings akin to royal palaces. The aim was to make the entire *vihāra* the "best dwelling to be habited by the lord of the ascetics" (*udāraṃ ... veśma yatindra-[sevyam]*).[28] This architectural innovation was further developed into the creation of temple-like spaces that exclusively focused on creating the Buddha's imminent presence and his broader cosmological environ without a residential function.

An early example of this development is the rock-cut monastery at Aurangabad in the western Deccan. The monastery, founded in the 2–3rd century CE as indicated by an early rock-cut *stūpa*, was expanded to add *vihāra*s and image shrines around the 6–7th centuries CE. Unlike typical *vihāra*s and image shrines that place images on the back wall, those in Aurangabad placed the Buddha images at the center of the structure to emphasize the centrality of the Buddha as the principal resident of the buildings. The most unique in this regard are Caves 6 and 7 in the eastern group of excavations at the site **(Fig. 4)**. While incorporating monastic cells on the sidewalls like *vihāra*s, these caves do not have a hall at the center. Instead, the builders installed a large cell or a shrine for a colossal image of the Buddha. This plan apparently compromised the comfort of the cells as living space because the central shrine blocked the sunlight from entering the cells throughout the day. Monks in the cells were isolated from each other because the central shrine blocked their front view. Another peculiar feature of the caves is that two cells opened on each side of the back wall. Instead of making them typical monastic cells, Buddha images were installed as if they were flanking the colossal Buddha in the central shrine. Besides the Buddha images, several large images were carved on both caves, including figures such as Tārās and Aṣṭamahābhaya Avalokiteśvara at Cave 7 **(Fig. 5)**. Their large size and frontal postures indicate that they were also objects of worship. These features suggest that the caves were not normal monastic residences but primarily temples that represented the Buddha's sacred world.[29] Considering the inhospitable condition of the cells, they were likely to be used for conducting special meditation practices and rituals rather than as residences.

A similar kind of architecture occupied a large portion of the rock-cut monasteries at Ellora in the same region. Of the early group of monasteries created on the southern side of the cliff (Caves 1–5) during the 6–7th centuries CE, the two largest are Caves 2 and 5. Cave 2 is an image

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[28] Ajanta Cave 16 inscription. See Tsukamoto 1996: Ajaṇṭā, no. 52, line 18. Also see Schopen 1997: 260.
[29] For further discussions about the iconographical intention of these caves, see Gupte and Mahajan 1962: 232–5; Huntington 1981.

FIG. 5
Aṣṭamahābhaya Avalokiteśvara,
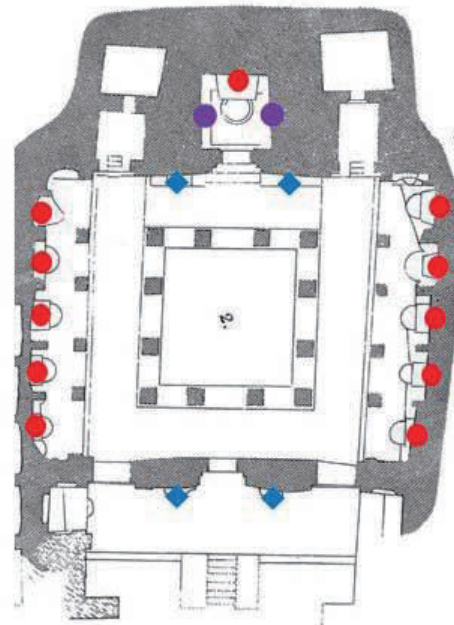Cave 7, Aurangabad
ca. 6th–7th century CE.
Photo: author

FIG. 6
Plan of Cave 2, Ellora
ca. 6-7th century CE.
(Modified after Fergusson and Burgess 1880: Pl. LVII)

● Buddha
● Buddha with two attendants/Bodhisattvas
◆ Attendants/Bodhisattvas

shrine with a unique plan. It not only has a central shrine, or *gandhakuṭī,* at the center of the back wall, but also has two rows of seated Buddhas in large niches on each of the interior side walls (**Fig. 6**). Two rows of long tables or benches carved on the floor of Cave 5 suggest that it was not a normal *vihāra*, but had some special, perhaps ritual function, likely for monastic community practices (**Fig. 7**). The most spectacular examples constructed in the later period of Ellora are Caves 11 and 12. Although its massive three-storied structure reminds us of the magnificent *vihāra*s at Nalanda and Ratnagiri, Cave 11 contains no residential cells. Instead, it has a courtyard with an image shrine on the ground floor, a verandah and four image shrines on the 2nd floor, and two image shrines with a large hall on the 3rd floor. While Cave 12 opens to monastic cells on the ground and the 2nd floors, the 3rd floor was designed as a space for rituals, as indicated by the fact that the walls are filled with rows of seated Buddhas (**Figs 8 & 9**).

● Buddha with two
   attendants/Bodhisattvas
◆ Attendants/ Bodhisattvas
▲ Female deities/
   Bodhisattvas
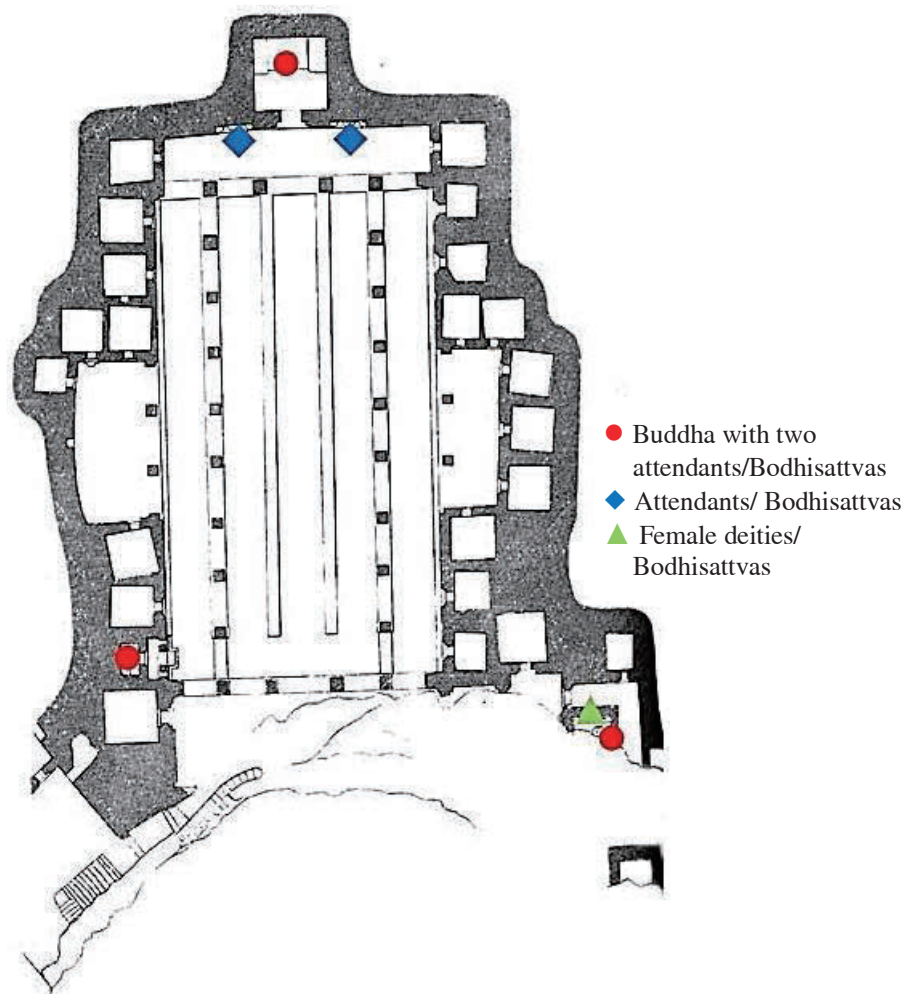
Fɪɢ. 7
Plan of Cave 5, Ellora
ca. 6-7th century CE.
(Modified after Fergusson and Burgess 1880: Pl. LIX)
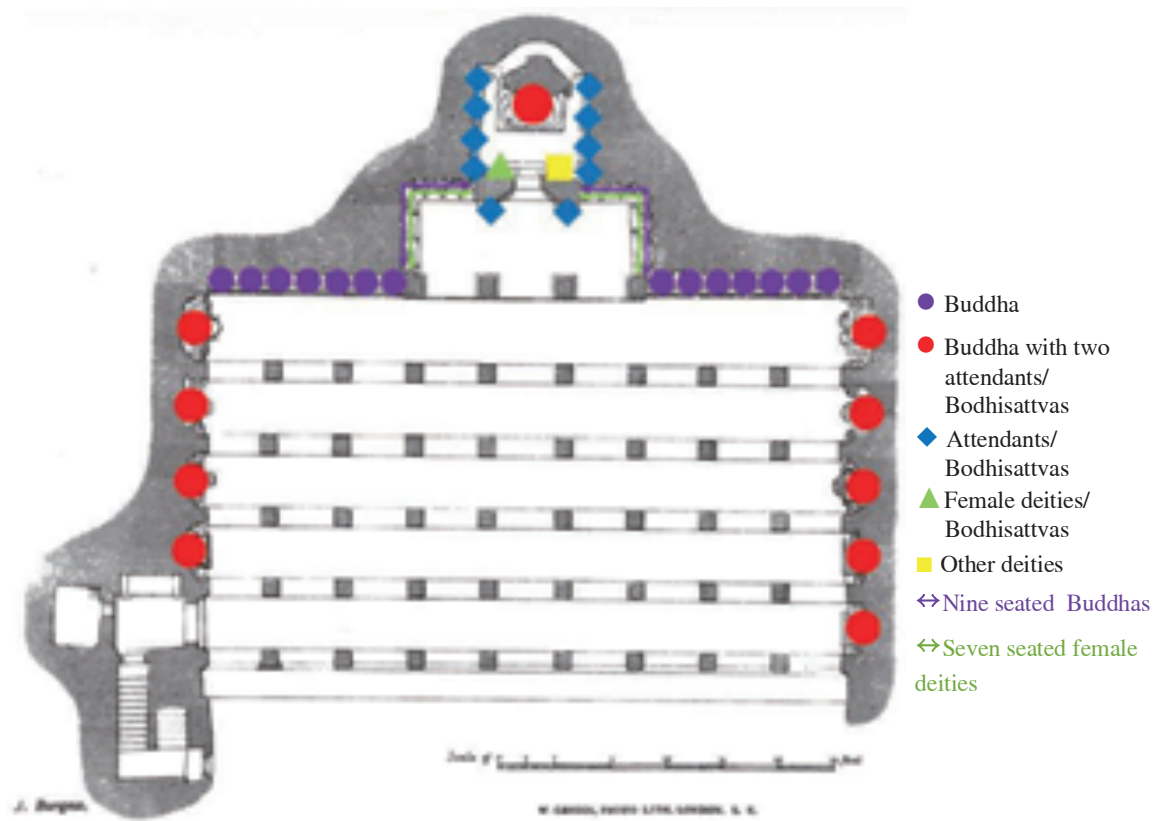
FIG. 8
Plan of Cave 12 (top floor), Ellora
ca. 8th century CE.
(Modified after Fergusson and Burgess 1880: Pl. LXV)

Legend:
- ● Buddha
- ● Buddha with two attendants/Bodhisattvas
- ◆ Attendants/Bodhisattvas
- ▲ Female deities/Bodhisattvas
- ■ Other deities
- ↔ Nine seated Buddhas
- ↔ Seven seated female deities

FIG. 9   Seated Buddhas, Cave 12, Ellora
ca. 8th century CE.
Photo: author

While the above two sites in the western Deccan created what seems to have been fully articulated temples by enshrining images, other regions created similar architectural forms based on their ongoing primacy of *stūpa* worship. In the rock-cut monasteries of western Malwa, the dominant cultic objects were *stūpa*s, although images were introduced most likely by the late 5th century CE (Nonogaki 2020: 501). In addition to the large *vihāra*s that enshrined *stūpa*s, three-dimensional rock-cut *stūpa*s carved in both the open air and in *caitya* halls were ubiquitous. Of them, the most elaborate architecture is Cave 12 at Dhamnar, a monastery consisting of a large *caitya* hall at the center of the complex surrounded with monastic cells along corridors (Fig. 10). Its scale and rich sculptural decoration suggest that this was the most important building in the Dhamnar monastic complex and probably in this region. Its unique plan also indicates the organization of expansive communal rituals that centered on the main *stūpa*. Images, on the other hand, were carved at the less-prominent parts of the monastic complex, such as in small niches attached to the *stūpa*, the entrances to the *caitya* halls, and the cells in the *vihāra* (Fig. 11). Cave 14 at Dhamnar, for example, includes an image shrine consisting of a seated Buddha in the central shrine, with surrounding images of seated and standing Buddhas as well as an image of the Buddha's *parinirvāna* (Figs 12 & 13). Because the shrine and images were located at the inner portion of the cave behind a *stūpa*, this exceptionally complex composition of images is not visible from the outside.

Another interesting example in this regard is Kolvi, where an image cell (Cave 37) is placed on the wall opposite to the entrance of a monastic cell (Cave 38). Such images must have been gazed at by the monks or nuns in the cells regularly, probably for the purpose of meditation or devotional practice (Fig. 14). This design offers a practice contrast with Cave 9 of the same site. Since the *stūpa* here faces a large hall (Cave 10) that may accommodate numerous people, it anticipates a group ritual (Cunningham 1864–5: Pl. LXXXIV; Nonogaki 2020: Fig. 10). As suggested by Nonogaki, these examples lead us to wonder if the *saṃgha* used cultic objects selectively for different purposes. While image worship was accepted in the monastery, it was, it appears, confined to individual, private, and/or esoteric rituals, as *stūpa*s occupied the authoritative or official status as the cultic object (Nonogaki 2020: 493). Such an unequal and nuanced relationship between *stūpa*s and images is also reflected in the locations of images that maintain an intimate link with the *stūpa*. Cave 7 at Kolvi, for example, takes the form of a *stūpa* but houses an image shrine carved underneath the dome (Fig. 15).[30] Kolvi Cave 2 and Binnayaga Cave 3 are image shrines with large and ornate antechambers, but the superstructures indicate that they are

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[30] Although located further north in Sind, the Kahujo-daro *stūpa* near Mirpur Khas (ca. 6th century CE) also had a similar image shrine on the western side of the *stūpa* (Cousens 1909–10: 83 and Pl. 33; van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1975: 161).

Fig. 10
Plan of Cave 12, Dhamnar
ca. 6–7th century CE?
(Modified after Cousens 1905–6: Pl. XLI)

Fig. 11
Seated Buddhas in the cells, Cave 12, Dhamnar
ca. 6–7th century CE?
Photos: author
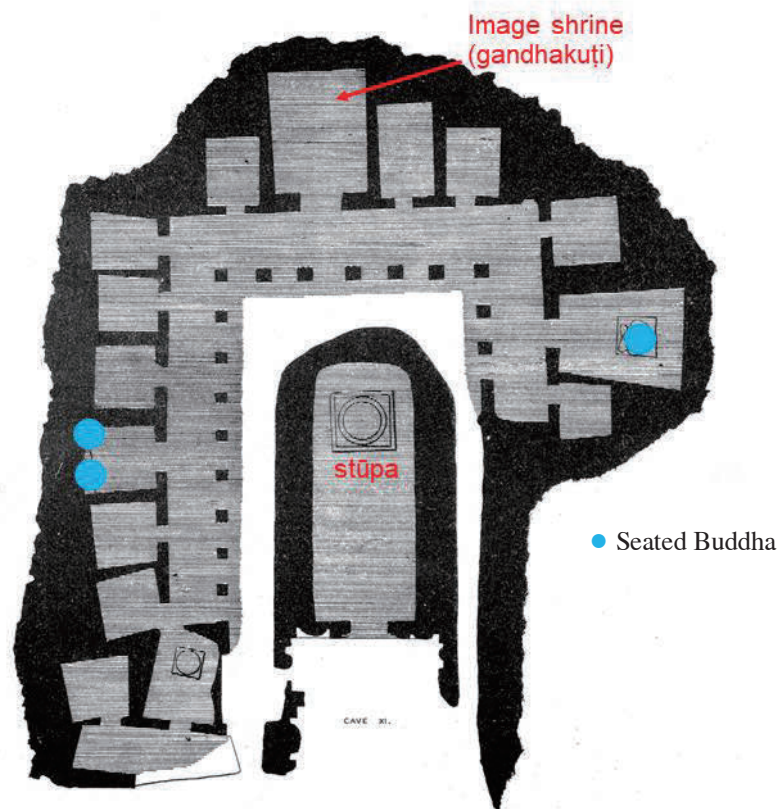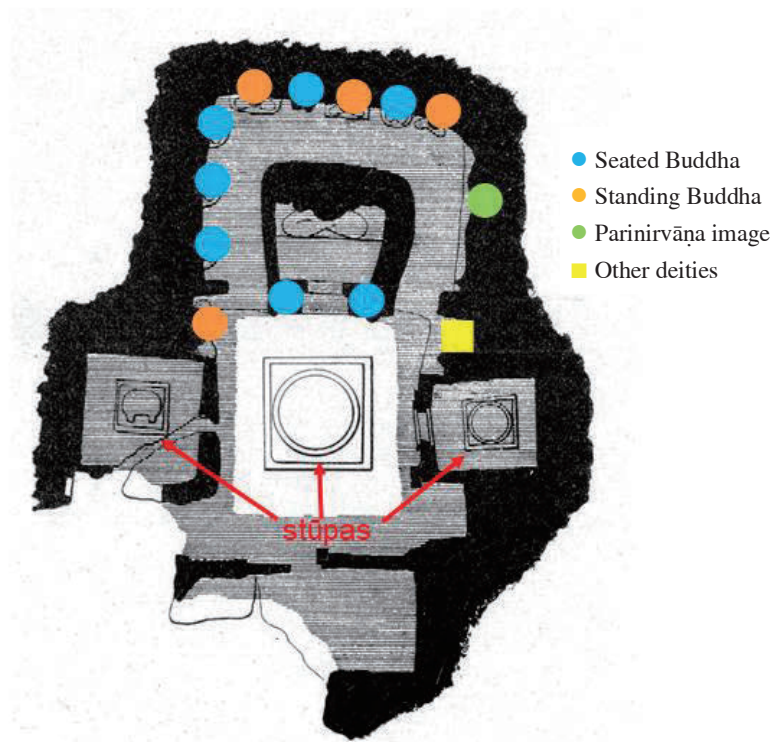
FIG. 12 Plan of Cave 14, Dhamnar
ca. 6–7th century CE?
(Modified after Cousens 1905–6: Pl. XLI)

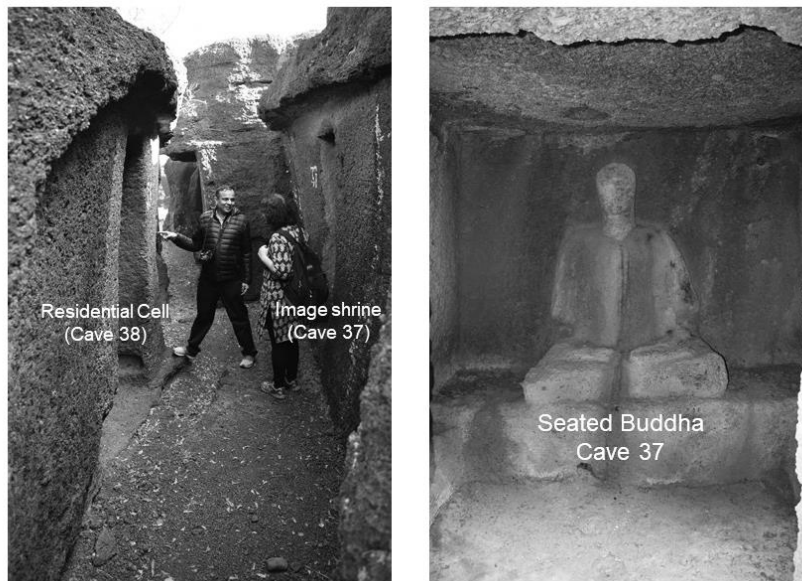FIG. 13 Buddhas, Cave 14, Dhamnar
ca. 6–7th century CE?
Photo: author

Fig. 14
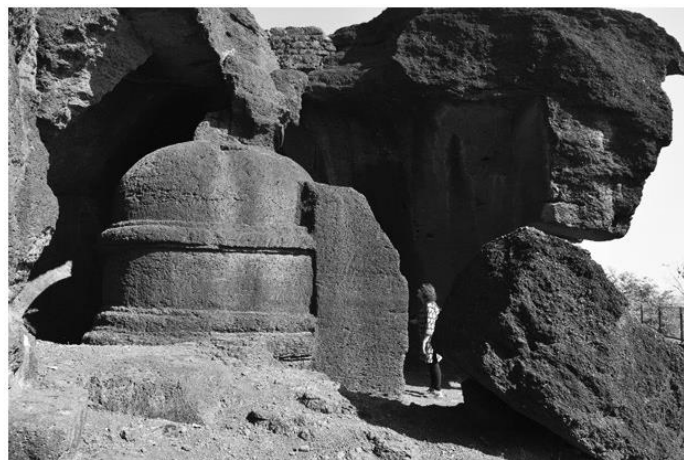Caves 37 and 38, Kolvi
ca. 6–7th century CE?
Photos: author

Fig. 15
Cave 7, Kolvi
ca. 6–7th century CE?
Photos: author

modeled after *stūpa*s.[31] These examples indicate that the image's authoritative status as the cultic object still depended on their association, juxtaposition, or alignment with *stūpa*s in this region **(Figs 16 & 17)**.

A similar combination of a *stūpa* with an image in ritual spaces is observed at later Buddhist sites in the eastern Deccan. While the region introduced image worship by the 3rd century CE around the same time as the western Deccan, it maintained the centrality of *stūpa* worship in monasteries, as seen at Sankaram in Anakapalle district. The monastery, where the most active construction period was probably between the 6 and 7th centuries CE and even later, is famous for the numerous rock-cut *stūpa*s that cover the entire monastic complex spreading over two adjacent hills. The largest structures of the complex are the main *stūpa* and the temple on the top of the eastern hill **(Fig. 18)**. The plan of the temple — consisting of the three image shrines at the center and monastic cells that surround the shrine area — is comparable with Dhamnar Cave 12 **(Fig. 10)**. Because the temple stood behind the main *stūpa*, it is invisible from the main entrance to the monastery at the western side of the eastern hill as well as from the western hill. It is also to be noted that the temple faces west towards the main *stūpa*. This layout, which has early parallels in Nagarjunakonda, could be an attempt to show the intimate relationship between the *stūpa* and images to authorize the latter as the cultic object (Shimada 2011: 143–4) **(Fig. 1 right)**. Besides these two largest structures on the site, the main components of the monasteries are seven rock-cut caves and numerous *stūpa*s carved on the two hills. Of the rock-cut caves, the largest one is Cave 1, which places a *stūpa* at the center of a square-pillared hall. Its plan strongly indicates the organization of communal rituals that focused on the *stūpa* **(Fig. 19)**. Although smaller in size, Cave 7 shows a similar plan too as it has carved benches surrounding the *stūpa*. The other caves at the site are all small and enshrine Buddha images (Caves 2, 3, 5) or are empty (Caves 4, 6, 8). Cave 3, for example, is a tiny shrine concealed behind a rock-cut *stūpa* **(Fig. 20)**. A seated Buddha carved on the back wall shows an intimate relationship with the *stūpa* by facing it. Although there is no icon now, Cave 8 opened up behind a large rock-cut *stūpa* revealing a similar locational arrangement **(Fig. 21)**. Their secluded location and small space make us wonder if these caves were used for individual meditative practice, like Kolvi Cave 38 **(Fig. 14)**.

CONSEQUENCES?

While seeing the remarkable development of temples with complex plans and spaces for personal as well as communal rituals centering around images and *stūpa*s, our fieldwork noted two phenomena that were seemingly related to the above developments. The first is the transformation

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[31] Since Binnayaga does not have an established numbering of the caves, I have followed the listing provided by Nonogaki 2020: 487–8. I thank Dr. Nonogaki for sharing this information.
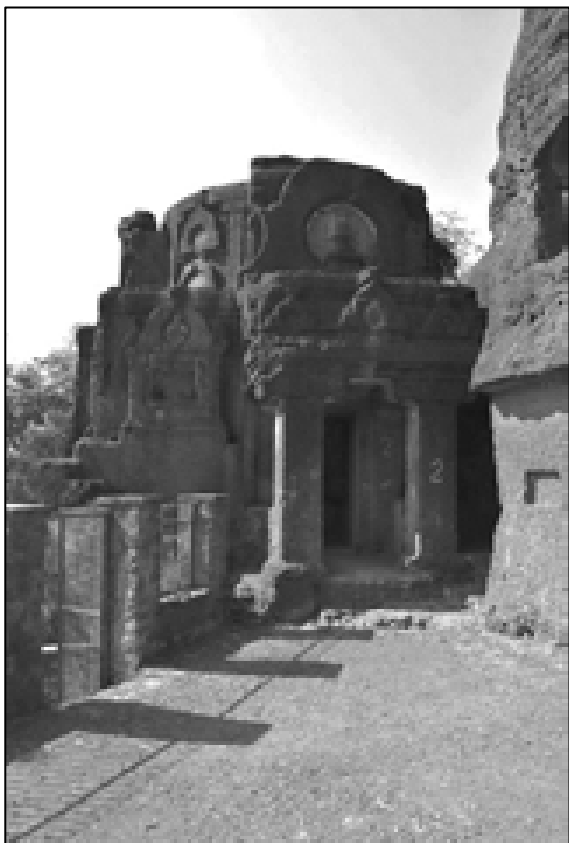
Fɪɢ. 16 Cave 2, Kolvi
ca. 6–7ᵗʰ century CE?
Photo: author

Fɪɢ. 17 Cave 3, Binnayaga
ca. 6–7ᵗʰ century CE?
Photo: author
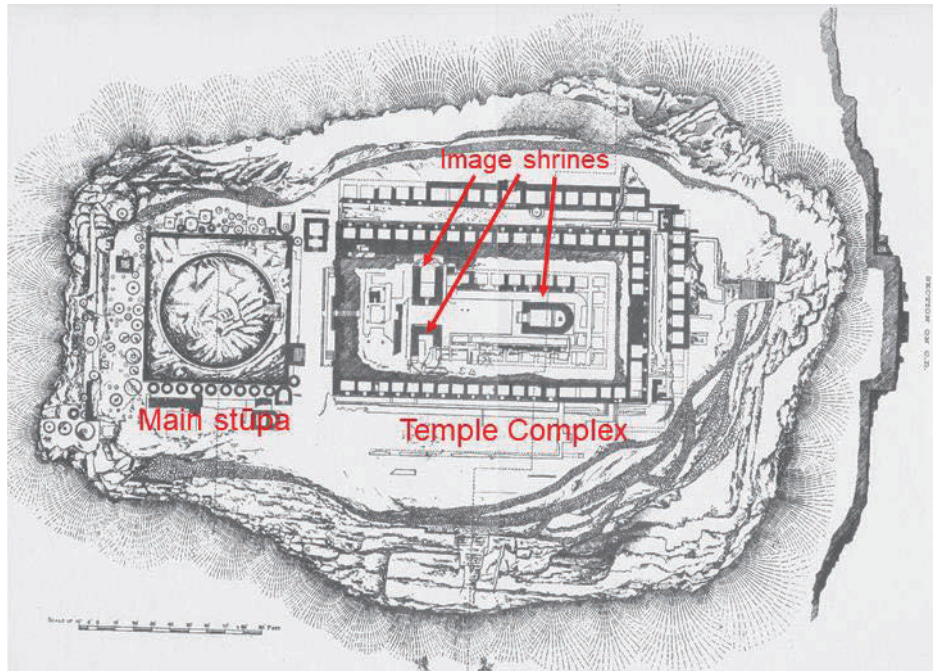
Fig. 18
Plan of the main *stūpa* and the temple complex, Sankaram
4–7th century CE.
(After Rea 1907–8: Pl. LXIII)
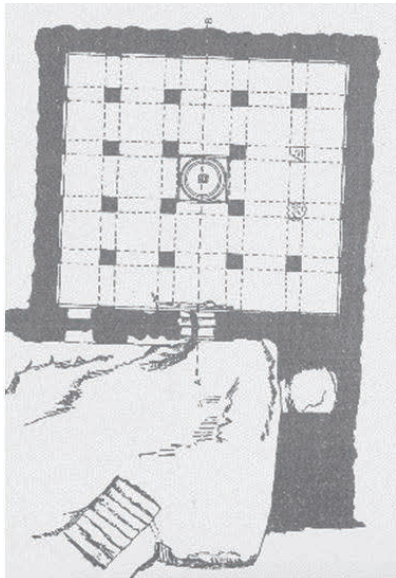
Fig. 19
Cave 1, Sankaram.

Left: Plan of the cave.
(After Rea 1907–8: Pl. LXII-j)

Right: *Stūpa* inside the cave.
Photo: author

FIG. 20
Cave 3, Sankaram.

Left: Plan of the cave.
(After Rea 1907–8: Pl. LXII-c)

Right: Entrance to the cave.
Photo: author
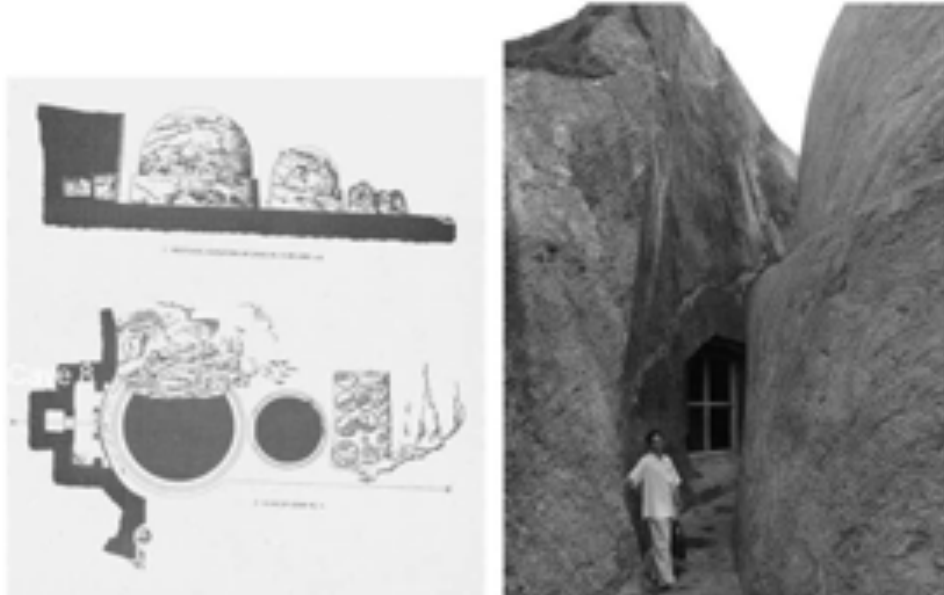
FIG. 21
Cave 8, Sankaram.

Left: Plan of the cave.
(After Rea 1907–1908, pl. LXIV-b)

Right: Entrance to the cave.
Photo: author

of *stūpa*s. Because the acceptance of image worship significantly expanded the ways and places in which to venerate the Buddha, *stūpa*s were no longer the exclusive site of the Buddha's presence. As represented by Ellora Cave 10, image worship also altered the shape of the *stūpa* into one closer to an image shrine. As is well known, such a transformation of the *stūpa* is confirmed archaeologically in the Nalanda main *stūpa*. From its modest beginning in the Gupta period, this example demonstrates how the *stūpa* developed into an imposing structure with four sub-towers and numerous images in the post-Gupta period (Ghosh 1986: 17–18). As the difference between the image shrine and *stūpa* became less apparent, the original significance of the *stūpa* as a mound enshrining corporeal relics may have receded at some sites.

It is interesting to note here that our fieldwork identified two monasteries that may not have had main *stūpa*s at all, i.e., Ellora and Sirpur. Although Ellora has Cave 10 which is a rock-cut *caitya*, it was created in the later phase of construction, dated roughly to the late 8th century CE. The early group of monasteries created on the southern side of the cliff (Caves 1–5) around the 6–7th centuries CE may not have had a *stūpa*, at least in rock-cut form. In Sirpur, despite the presence of four relatively small but highly ornate monasteries dated to the 7–8th centuries CE, there is no conclusive evidence of a *stūpa* in their vicinity. The only structure identified and reconstructed as a *stūpa* by the excavator is located far away from the clusters of monasteries and has an odd shape. One possible explanation is that the *stūpa*s were completely destroyed during religious conflicts. This theory finds support in textual evidence like the *Mahābhārata,* which condemns *stūpa*s as "bone-chambers" (*eḍūka*) whose worship was one of the practices of the Kali *yuga*.[32] The proximity between Hindu and Buddhist temples in Ellora and Sirpur also tempts us to consider the socio-religious context of possible conflict or tension between these communities. However, one problem with this hypothesis is that these sites do not yield evidence of such destruction or conflicts. This is odd, particularly in the case of Ellora, since rock-cut monasteries usually record some remnants of what occurred at the site. This leads us to pursue another possibility. Instead, it is possible that Buddhist monasteries did not build *stūpa*s out of consideration of the problematic nature of the buildings as understood by their neighbors, and because the abode of the Buddha already existed within their *vihāra*s. In this regard, it is interesting that the early group of monasteries at Ellora includes one cave (Cave 2) which, although appearing like a *vihāra* in the plan, does not have monastic cells but has side and back walls filled with Buddha images (Fig. 6). Considering the nuanced relationship between the *stūpa* and image in this period, the cave could have been created and used as an alternative to a *stūpa* when the monastic complex started in the 6th century CE.

The second phenomenon observed during the course of fieldwork is the downsizing of

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[32] *Mahābhārata* 03188064c–03188066c; Allchin 1957: 1.

*vihāra*s in some monasteries of the western Deccan. From around the 1st century CE and even before, a standard type of *vihāra* in this region was the quadrangular one with a large courtyard surrounded by monastic cells. *Vihāra*s of this type with more than fifteen monastic cells were not uncommon in the Sātavāhana and the Vākāṭaka periods (**Figs 1 & 3**). Such large *vihāra*s seem to have ceased to be constructed in the post-Vākataka period in this region. Of the five caves in the western group of Aurangabad, the only finished *vihāra* is Cave 3. This cave opens to only four cells and was probably unused (Brancaccio 2010: 90). Other caves are image shrines (Caves 2, 5), a *caitya* hall (Cave 4), and an unfinished *vihāra* with no cells (Cave 1). In the eastern group (Caves 6–9), there are no finished caves with residential cells besides Caves 6 and 7 (**Fig. 4**), although Cave 8 seems to have been designed as a *vihāra*. Despite the presence of highly impressive architecture oriented towards ritual practices, evidence for the presence of residential monks who would have conducted and participated in such rituals is largely absent. A similar tendency can be noted at Ellora. While the early group of caves includes two large non-*vihāra*s (Caves 2 and 5) (**Figs 6 & 7**), the remaining three *vihāra*s (Caves 1, 3, 4), are rather unimpressive. Although Cave 1 opens onto eight cells, the three cells on the southern side were unfinished. Cave 4 has two cells but seems unfinished. The only complete *vihāra* was Cave 3 with 12 cells. This tendency can also be observed in the later caves created around the 8th century CE (Caves 6-12). While the impressive ritual spaces created in Caves 11 and 12 may lead us to assume many monks lived here (**Fig. 8**), the residential facility is rather restricted. While Cave 12 is larger than any Buddhist cave in the western Deccan, it contains only 11 cells on the ground floor and 18 cells on the 2nd, with ample space among the cells. Cave 11 has no residential cells carved on the walls. The other five caves are either unfinished (Cave 7), relatively small (Caves 6, 8, 9), or a *caitya* hall (Cave 10).[33] Instead of excavating more cells, these caves left more space to create *vihāra*s with complex plans, larger shrines, and many images.[34] These features indicate that the actual number of monks who lived at Ellora could have been much smaller than what we might expect from the impressive architecture intended for rituals.

CONCLUSION

As highlighted above, the so-called decline of Indian Buddhist monasteries after the early historic period can be divided into two crucial periods: the 3–4th century CE and the 6th–7th century CE. While the first period corresponds to the declining period of the Sātavāhana–Ikṣvākus of the Deccan and the Kuṣāns in the north, the impact to Buddhist monasteries in the Deccan was more dramatic. Although the reasons for this drastic decline requires more investigation, a notable

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[33] The number of cells opened in each cave are nine (Cave 6), six (Cave 8), and one (Cave 9). Although Cave 10 opens nine empty cells, it is unclear if they were residential cells or shrines.

[34] On the iconography of these sculptures, see Gupte 1964.

difference from northern India is that this region experienced a longer period of political fragmentation. In northern India, where the imperial Guptas consolidated power by the late 4th century CE, many monasteries seem to have survived the disruption of the 3rd–4th century CE and developed new construction work between the 5th and early 6th century CE. When the Gupta imperial system collapsed in the early 6th century CE, however, it had a significant impact on the fates of northern monasteries in the late 6th and 7th century CE. This period may not necessarily be regarded as a period of decline, because it witnessed the emergence of monastic centers in new areas. The fragmented political, economic, and religious landscape of post-Gupta India however presented challenging circumstances in which the *saṃgha*s maintained their presence in broader society.

Corresponding to these changes, Indian Buddhist monastic architecture in the post-Gupta period dramatically transformed from the older forms consisting of relic shrines (*stūpa*s) and monastic residences (*vihāra*s). By installing Buddha images both in *stūpa*s and *vihāra*s, the visibility of the 'living' Buddha in the monasteries significantly increased. The efforts to create proper living places for the Buddha in monasteries resulted in the development of new sacred spaces in the form of temples that represented the Buddha's cosmological world with complex arrangements of images and *stūpa*s. Some monasteries like Kolvi and Sankaram also had small shrines in secluded places with single cells containing images. Because these temples and small shrines were created in the interior of the monastic complex, they were used most likely by monks to conduct a variety of rituals and meditative/visualization practices. As indicated by the transformation of the *stūpa* into a form of image temple, and even their possible disappearance from some monasteries, the growing presence of temples in the monastery had a significant impact in altering the fundamental nature of the monastic architecture. The disproportionally limited residential functions of Aurangabad and Ellora even leads us to speculate that some monasteries in this period could have primarily functioned as the place for rituals and worship, much like early medieval Hindu temples. Is it possible to see these features as the reflection of *saṃgha*'s effort to flexibly accommodate themselves in post-Gupta India? Although our survey is still far from comprehensive and a decisive answer to this question remains elusive, the direction of our research aims to build a larger body of knowledge on the various types of Buddhist monasteries in this period.

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Views from the Black Mountain:
The Rock-Cut *Mahāvihāra* at Kānheri/Kṛṣṇagiri in Konkan

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INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist rock-cut monastery at Kanheri/Kṛṣṇagiri in the coastal region of Konkan, Maharashtra is located within the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in the greater Mumbai metropolitan area. With its 101 caves and 58 rock-cut inscriptions spanning 1000 years from the beginning of the Common Era to the 11th century, Kanheri is the largest Buddhist rock-cut monastery in western Deccan, with the highest number of inscriptions and the longest life span.[1] A handful of inscriptions from the late 5th century onwards refer to the rock-cut monastery at Kanheri as being a *mahāvihāra,* a term that is used in Pāli texts to describe large monastic dwellings (Roth 1997: 44). In later epigraphic sources, the term alluded to complex and extensive monastic centers with a large numbers of monks in residence. Major Buddhist institutions designated as *mahāvihāras* prospered in Bihar and Bengal during the Pāla period (8th–11th c), where they enjoyed royal support and became important centers for Buddhist learning with an international reputation. A thorough re-examination of archaeological, artistic, and epigraphic evidence from the Kanheri caves makes a compelling case for the fact that this site, to date hardly considered in the scholarship, was in fact one of the great Buddhist monasteries of India that rose to international prominence by the turn of the 6th century.

EARLIEST EVIDENCE

The caves at Kanheri were established sometime during the 1st century CE when the Sātavāhanas controlled the region and the site experienced continued patronage throughout the 2nd and 3rd century as votive inscriptions suggest.[2] The earliest epigraphic attestation of Kanheri as a *mahāvihāra* can be found in a copperplate inscription dated to the late 5th century and mentioning the Traikuṭākas rulers of northern Konkan. The inscription was found by James Bird in 1839 in a votive *stūpa* in the area before the *caitya* hall (Cave 3) and is now unfortunately lost (**Fig. 1**; Bird

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[1] In addition, 27 stone-slab inscriptions were documented in proximity to the group of funerary *stūpa*s situated in the southwestern corner of the site: Gokhale 1991: 109.

[2] For an overview of caves and inscriptions at Kanheri, see Gokhale 1991.

1841: 94). It mentioned the gift of a *caitya* in stone and brick, likely the *stūpa* in which the inscription was deposited, at the Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* by a donor named Buddharuci coming from Sindhu Viśaya or Sindh (870km to the north) (Burgess and Indraji 1976: 58; Gokhale 1991: 59–62; Mirashi 1955: 29–32). The name of the monastery as 'Kṛṣṇagiri' or 'Black Mountain' clearly alludes to the black color of the rock hills where the caves are excavated. The occurrence of the epithet *mahāvihāra* in this copperplate inscription aligns perfectly with the epigraphic diffusion of the term elsewhere in India during the Gupta and post-Gupta period.[3] The rock-cut monastery at Kanheri continued to be referred to as a *mahāvihāra* throughout the 9th century in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period inscriptions discussed below.

The use of the term '*mahāvihāra*' or 'great monastery' in the context of the Kanheri caves elicits an idea of monumentality that goes beyond the simple size of the site; the term brings forth notions of antiquity and religious authority and is interwoven with the formation of a Buddhist collective memory. Monumentality highlights power relations and distinction, and its implementation requires significant mobilization of resources and technical know-how. The monumentality of the Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* is underscored by a number of features: the huge extension of the monastic site with so many caves and resident monks that required great organization and financial support; the presence of a complex water collection and distribution system with built infrastructure, such as a retaining wall that was still extant in 1896 on the northwest edge of the site (Bhandarkar 1896: 165); and finally, the presence of truly colossal sculptures in the most 'public' area of the site.

AN EXTENSIVE *MAHĀVIHĀRĀ*

The fact that the Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* had a huge monastic population at the end of the 5th century is demonstrated by the number of funerary *stūpas* erected under a rock shelter at the southwestern edge of the site. This is the largest assemblage of funerary monuments ever documented in the western Deccan caves. Each small *stūpa* was erected to commemorate an accomplished monk who resided and died at Kanheri (Schopen 1997: 175–6) and while a few of these monuments may have been established in the earliest phases of occupation of the site, most of the surviving inscriptions associated with these monuments date to the 5th century or later (Gokhale 1991: 109–10; Schopen 1997b: 176). This shows that a considerable number of advanced Buddhist monastics were based at Kṛṣṇagiri precisely at the time when the site was first being identified as a *mahāvihāra*. Remarkably, the Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* did not include caves designed to function as large communal monastic dwellings of the type seen at Ajanta, with a square courtyard and rows

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[3] The term *mahāvihāra* also occurs in the Ikṣvāku and Viṣṇukuṇḍin inscriptions from Andhra Pradesh. See EIAD, nos. 10, 20, 55, 61, 175, 180, 186, 407. For the detailed discussions of these inscriptions, see Tournier 2018: 27–69.

FIG. 1 View of the *Caitya* Hall (Cave 3), Kanheri.
Photo: author

FIG. 2 View of Caves 93–95, Kanheri.
Photo: author

of cells opening on three sides. Instead, at Kanheri one finds a great number of smaller and independent rock-cut units scattered on the hill, typically consisting of one cell opening onto a room and preceded by a porch **(Fig. 2)**. Such small structures were undoubtedly more conducive to the cultivation of individual ascetic goals rather than to practice of cenobitic monasticism.[4] The placement of two colossal rock-cut sculptures of the Buddha in *varadamudrā* (ca. 7m high) right at the entrance of the *caitya* hall Cave 3, the most 'public' cave at the site **(Fig. 3)**, speaks of the monumentality of the Kanheri *mahāvihāra*. A late 5th-century inscription incised on a pillar to the right of the entrance to the hall, in proximity to one the colossal Buddha images, states that the Buddha (*Bhagavat*) image (*pratima*) was the gift of Śakyabhikṣu Buddhagoṣa, the *mahāgandhakuṭī-vārika* or the caretaker of the great *gandhakuṭī*, who was also the pupil of Reverend Dhammavatsa, a teacher of the *Tipiṭaka*.[5] This inscription by an eminent monk who was a master in the transmission of Buddhist texts confirms that at the end of the 5th century, Kanheri was recognized as an important center for Buddhist learning by eminent teachers who mastered the Buddhist canon. Contemporary inscriptions recovered at the memorial *stūpa*s corroborate the fact that accomplished masters resided at Kanheri, such as *arhats* who attained the 'three knowledges' (*tevijā*; Gohkale 1991: 111, epitaph no. 1; Schopen 1997b: 178) or the 'analytical understanding' (*paṭisambhidā*; Gokhale 1991: 114, epitaph no. 3).

The votive inscription by the above-noted Śakyabhikṣu Buddhagoṣa likely refers to the donation of the colossal Buddha carved right next to the epigraph, while the *mahāgandhakuṭī* where Buddhagoṣa performed his duties was most likely the *caitya* hall where the image was carved, a great *gandhakuṭī* worthy of a *mahāvihāra*. The title of *mahāgandhakuṭī-vārika* is also relevant if connected to a passage related in the *Divyāvadāna* that provides information on what a *gandhakuṭī* was: a structure dedicated not only to Śākyamuni but also to the six Buddhas of the past, which included a *caitya* with a fore area to be regularly swept (*Divyāvadāna* no.23, translated by Strong 1977: 402). The textual references to *gandhakuṭī* (Strong 1977: 393; Schopen 1997a: 268) suggest that such a structure was often linked to monasteries but not necessarily located in

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[4] Evidence for the ancient practice of forest asceticism in the area was documented by Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji in the nearby Padana Hill, situated only 3km away from Kanheri and overlooking the Buddhist monastery. Indraji recorded a group of eleven fragmentary Prakrit inscriptions and symbols at this site dating from the 1st to the 6th century CE (Indraji 1882: 45–56). They recorded individual names and were positioned in proximity to a natural cave, along with several sets of footprints. Inscription C dated to the 1st century CE refers to the hill as "the abode of *siddhas*" (*pavato abhuṁto sidhavasati / parvatebhyantaḥ siddhavastiḥ*; Cecil 2020: 161). Inscriptions E and I refer to an ascetic Musala whose name is surprisingly similar to the forest ascetic Musalaka who, according to the *Pūrṇāvadāna*, was converted by the Buddha in the vicinity of Sopara in Kokan, in an area that could well coincide with the surroundings of Kanheri (Indraji 1882: 54–5).

[5] Gokhale 1991: 52, no. 7 and Luders 1912: 103, No. 989 translate the term *vārika* as "guardian". Strong also addresses this inscription from Kanheri (Strong 1977: 400), while a broad discussion of the meaning of the word -*vārika* in compound terms appears in Silk 2008: 102–25 and Schopen 1997a: 268.

the interior of a *vihāra*, a feature that would certainly apply to the *caitya* halls carved in the rock-cut monasteries of western Deccan and in particular to the Kanheri *caitya* hall Cave 3.

Echoes of Kanheri as a *mahāvihāra* resonate in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims Faxian and Xuanzang who both describe a monumental rock-cut monastery situated in the Deccan. While some of the details included in their accounts do not match what we see at the site today (and it is likely they did not visit the site themselves), their descriptions surprisingly reflect key features unique to the Kanheri caves. The 5th-century traveller Faxian, while talking about the rock-cut 'Pigeon' monastery in the Deccan, describes the site as having many small monastic cells, rock-cut stairs cutting across the hill, water twirling and flowing in a stream in front of the caves, and many *arhats* living in the monastery (Beal 1906: I, 69–70).

In the 7th century, Xuanzang echoes the description by Faxian when speaking of a monastery called Brahmaragiri (Deeg 2005: 487) that was cut in "a solid mass of rock without approaches or intervening valleys." The monastery, whose foundation is associated by Xuanzang with a Sātavāhana king and the Buddhist thinker Nāgārjuna, included elaborate rock-cut works, *vihāras* on five levels, and complex waterworks. It was huge monastery, occupied by over a "1000 monks", and had a major library "with all the authoritative works of instruction spoken by Śākya Buddha, and all the explanatory compilations (commentaries) of the Bodhisattvas, and the exceptional collection of the miscellaneous school" (Beal 1906: II, 215). While the location of this monastery as situated by Xuanzang (about 300*li* southwest of the Kosala country) makes the identification with the Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* problematic,[6] the picture offered by the Chinese pilgrim seems to capture the reality of the caves at Kanheri quite well.[7]

The Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* continued to flourish as a major place for learning throughout the next phase of recorded patronage (the 9th century) in conjunction with the triumph of esoteric Buddhist traditions. Two important epigraphs from the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period (8th–11th c) — in Cave 11 (the so-called Darbar Cave) and Cave 12 (just opposite of Cave 11) — mention major donations at the Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* (Mirashi 1977: 1–6, nos. 1–2; Gokhale 1991: 66–72, nos. 21–22; Tsukamoto 1996: 425–8 [Kanheri nos. 21–23]). Unfortunately, these inscriptions, engraved in visible positions on the main architrave of the caves, are barely legible today.[8]

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[6] Xuanzang states that Brahmaragiri is 300*li* (Chinese miles) (about 150km) southwest of (Dakṣiṇa) Kosala, which is usually taken as the Chhattisgarh area. In a 5th-century inscription from Cave 16 at Ajanta by the Vākāṭaka minister Varāhadeva, Kosala is also celebrated as a conquest of his overlord Hariṣeṇa,

[7] The description of an impressive rock-cut monastery in South India by the 8th-century Korean pilgrim Heicho echoes the accounts by Faxian and Xuanzang. My thanks go to Akira Shimada for reviewing the relevant passages.

[8] The epigraphs in question from Caves 11 and 12 were first copied by West in 1862, who actually combined together two inscriptions found in Cave 12 (West 1862: Nos 14 and 43).

FIG. 3
Colossal Buddha,
Right porch of the
caitya hall (Cave 3),
Kanheri.
Photo: author

FIG. 4 Unfinished *Caitya* Hall (Cave 1), Kanheri.
Photo: author

The inscription from the larger Darbar Cave 11 is dated to the Śaka year 775 and mentions the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings Govinda III and his successor Amoghavarṣa I, as well as the Mahāsāmantas Pullaśakti and Kapardin II. The inscription commemorates the donation by the Gomin Avighnākara from the Gauḍa country (or Bengal) of a permanent endowment of 100 *drammas* for the construction of meditation rooms and clothing for the monks at the '*Śri Kṛṣṇagiri mahārāja mahāvihāra*' (Mirashi 1977: 6, line 4). This epigraph is laid out as a contract, as it refers to the presence of two witnesses and contains instructions on how to administer the gift after the donor's death. It also includes a final curse against anyone who misappropriates the gift: such an individual would be reborn in one of the hells and eat cow flesh vomited by dogs.

From this inscription, we learn that the rock-cut monastery at Kanheri was designated by the 9th century as the '*Śri Kṛṣṇagiri mahārāja mahāvihāra*', a term that at this particular time aligns the cave center to the great contemporary monasteries of northern India, such as the *Śri Nalānda mahāvihāra*. Much like the *mahāvihāras* of north India in the Pāla period, the caves at *Kṛṣṇagiri* must have received significant royal patronage: the three large tanks excavated at the western top edge of the site situated right next to a retaining wall (still extant in mid-19th century) were projects that required a considerable financial investment and may have been undertaken under princely auspices. The Kanheri findings of clay seals with impressions of the *ye dhammā hetu* formula, as well as a seal with the seated Buddha at Bodhgaya documented by West in 1860–1 but now unfortunately lost, position Kanheri with the great Pāla monasteries. The conspicuous gift of a devotee coming all the way from Bengal shows that the *Śri Kṛṣṇagiri mahārāja mahāvihāra* was well connected in the 9th century to the great circuit of the northern *mahāvihāras*.

A poorly legible inscription from Cave 11 that still remains unpublished (personal communication by Nicolas Morrissey) offers a further attestation to this late phase of prosperity and growth of the cave monastery. It relates the donation of two separate endowments for the repair and expansion of a *vihāra* overseen by a *navakarmika* at the *Kṛṣṇagiri mahāvihāra*. It is tempting to ascribe the aborted excavation of the second unfinished *caitya* hall Cave 1 (situated in proximity to the earlier Cave 3 (Fig. 4)) to this particular moment of expansion of the monastery. The barely roughed-out excavation, of which only the rock façade remains, shows a configuration that could well align the structure with the design of the later Buddhist *caitya* hall of Cave 1 at Ellora.

The *Śri Kṛṣṇagiri mahārāja mahāvihāra* was undoubtedly a prominent center for Buddhist studies in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period, with its emphasis on ascetic cultivation and esoteric teachings that resonated with the isolated location of the site and the configuration of the monastery. The inscription in Cave 12 dated to the Śaka year 765 — and thus 10 years earlier than the one in Cave 11 — commemorates the gift of 20 *drammas* for the worship of Bhagavat, three *drammas* for repairs in the *vihāra*, and five *drammas* for books in addition to a larger perpetual endowment totaling 160 drammas to the *Śri Kṛṣṇagiri saṃgha* by a certain Viṣṇugupta, son of Pūrṇahari

(Mirashi 1977: 1–3; Gokhale 1991: 71 nos. 22). The epigraph also mentions two Śilāhāra princes: Pullaśakti, the Mahāsāmanta of Kōṅkan, and his successor Kapardin II, under the rule of Amogha-varṣa I, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king in power during the mid-9th century. Viṣṇugupta's monetary gift for books significantly surpasses the amount designated for repairs at the *vihāra*, quite possibly for Cave 11 itself — a sure indication of the fact that the great monastery at *Śri Kṛṣṇagiri* had an extensive library and was an important seat of Buddhist learning. In fact, the largest cave at the *Śri Kṛṣṇagiri mahārāja mahāvihāra*, Cave 11 **(Fig. 5)**, was not a residential cave but rather a large, rectangular plain hall with two long low cut benches likely used by monks to study, recite and copy sutras.[9] It is an unusual type of cave in western Deccan, comparable only to the multi-storied Cave 5 at Ellora, thus likely a contemporary excavation.

CENTER FOR TANTRIC TEACHINGS

Textual sources provide additional evidence which demonstrate that precisely at the time the votive inscriptions were recorded in Caves 11 and 12, the *Śri Kṛṣṇagiri mahārāja mahāvihāra* was indeed a very prominent center for Tantric learning in Konkan and well-connected to the famous *mahāvihāra* of north India supported by the Pāla rulers. Between the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century, the Tantric master Jñānapāda, the founder of the earlier of the two exegetical schools of the *Guhyasamājatantra*, studied for nine years in Konkan at a place called '*Nam mkha'i śiṅ ldan*' prior to becoming a teacher at Vikramaśīla.[10] Davidson (2002: 312) identifies this place with Kṛṣṇagiri, thus locating the ascetic training of Jñānapāda at the Kanheri caves, while Szántó (2015: 540) tentatively locates the site at Kadri in Karnataka.[11]

The renowned Buddhist scholar Atiśa also allegedly went to the Kṛṣṇagiri *vihāra* prior to taking his vows at the Uddaṇḍapura (Odantapuri) *mahāvihāra*. The list of 'Indian and Tibetan Panditas' included in the *Chronicle of Buddhism in India and Tibet* by Bu ston Rin chen grub, written sometime between 1322 and 1326 (van der Kuijp 2013: 115), tells us that at the age of 19, Atiśa traveled to the Kṛṣṇagiri *vihāra* where he:

> commenced the study of the meditative science of the Buddhists which consists of the Triśikṣā or the three studies — morality, meditation and divine learning —, and for this purpose he went to the vihāra of Kṛṣṇagiri to receive his lessons from Rāhula Gupta. Here he was given the secret name of Jñānaguhyavājra, and was initiated into the mysteries of esoteric Buddhism. (Das 1893: I, 8)

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[9] Cave 12 at Kanheri allows plenty of light to enter the space, making it suitable for activities such as the copying of sutras. Its layout calls to mind the monastic study halls of more recent Himalayan monas-teries.

[10] As in the Tibetan translation of Vitapāda's commentary to *Mañjuśrīmukhāgama* (Szántó 2015: 550–2).

[11] Szántó suggests that Jñānapāda, usually associated with the patronage of the Pāla king Dharmapāla in the late 9th century, had already risen to prominence at the time of the ruler Devapāla, sometime after 810 CE and before ca. 850 CE (Szántó 2015: 540)

It is tempting to view the monumental rock-cut seats excavated in proximity to Cave 101 in the uppermost series of caves as 'thrones' where such prominent and accomplished *siddhas* sat while teaching or engaging in meditative practices (Fig. 6).

Perhaps the most remarkable references to the Kṛṣṇagiri monastery as one of the great inter-national Buddhist Tantric centers can be found in a Sanskrit *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* manuscript from Nepal, dated 1015 CE (CUL, Skt. Add. 1643; Foucher 1900; Kim 2013). This manuscript contains an illustrated list of the most important Buddhist sites and cultic images situated in the subcontinent at the time. Including locations in Gandhara, Uddyana, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Sri Lanka, Andhra and Konkan with relative explicatory labels, it traces a geography of esoteric Buddhism. Kṛṣṇagiri in Konkan is the only place represented twice in this great list of sites, and both illustrations and captions leave no doubt as to its identity as the rock-cut monastery at Kanheri.

The first reference to the Kanheri caves appears on Folio 214v, at the end of the 30th chapter of the manuscript (Figs 7 and 8). The label identifies the image as being a representation of the *khaḍga caitya* at Kṛṣṇagiri in Konkan. The focal point of the illustration is a white *stūpa* enclosed in a shrine that is inferred by the presence of a bejeweled door. The *caitya* is located among rocks and trees, and within the hills of black rock are two square openings, possibly depictions of monastic caves or cells, in which two monks are sitting, both slightly turned towards the central *caitya*. The monk on the left holds a book in his right hand, while below two more monks look up towards the sitting monastic masters and the *caitya* — an incredible 11th-century visual reference to the Kanheri caves. The ancient name of the site as Kṛṣṇagiri is clearly referenced by the black rocks covered by the thick forest.[12] The monk holding a manuscript in his hand alludes to the existence at the site of a major Buddhist scholastic center, an important function of the monastery confirmed also by the above-noted 9th-century inscription from Cave 12 recording a donation for books.

The *stūpa* labeled as being the *khaḍga caitya* in the manuscript illustration, clearly erected within the enclosed space of a cave, is very interesting. The Sanskrit term *khaḍga* ('rhinoceros horn' or 'rhinoceros') has a long history in the Buddhist textual tradition. It refers to individuals

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[12] The particular depiction of trees in this illustration of the Kṛṣṇagiri *mahāvihāra* seems to corroborate the hypothesis proposed by Davidson that the great Tantric master Jñānapāda resided at Kanheri. The etymology of the name of the monastery where Jñānapāda resided in Konkan as given in the Tibetan translation of Vitapāda's commentary to the *Mañjuśrīmukhāgama* is discussed by Szántó (2015: 551): "If we read the text as transmitted in the Peking Canon (Ōta. 2729, 108a3: ... *śiṅ rnams 'khril śiṅ steṅ du bres pa lta bur gnas pa'o //*) and if we grant closer attention to Tibetan grammar, it would seem that the meaning is something more along the lines of: 'the trees are such that they are coiled and spreading upwards'." This description actually mirrors perfectly the images of the spreading trees with coiled trunks in the illustration of Kṛṣṇagiri on Folio 214v of the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* from the Cambridge University Library (CUL, Skt. Add. 1643).

FIG. 5 Interior of Cave 11, Kanheri.
Photo: author

FIG. 6 Rock-cut Seat near Cave 101, Kanheri.
Photo: author

FIG. 7 Kṛṣṇagiri (right), *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* manuscript, 11th century, Nepal.
(CUL, Skt. Add. 1643, Fol. 214v) © Cambridge University Library

FIG. 8 Detail of Fig 7. Illustration of Kṛṣṇagiri, *Prajñāpāramitāstotra*, 11th century, Nepal.
(CUL, Skt. Add. 1643, Fol. 214v) © Cambridge University Library

FIG. 7 Kṛṣṇagiri (left), *Prajñāpāramitāstotra*, 11th century, Nepal.
(CUL, Skt. Add. 1643, Fol. 220v) © Cambridge University Library

pursuing enlightenment in solitude and to *pratyekabuddhas*. Its most immediate association is with the so-called *Rhinoceros sūtra*, an important Mahāyāna text preserved in Pāli, Sanskrit, and Gandhārī (Solomon and Glass 2000).[13] The text is a eulogy of forest asceticism where practitioners are encouraged to "wander alone like rhinos" (Solomon and Glass 2000: 106), to cut ties with the material world, and to live in solitude in the forest to pursue enlightenment. Such a scenario perfectly fits the milieu of Kṛṣṇagiri: a *mahāvihāra* with a strong ascetic propensity and a large number of small, individual caves where traditions of meditations and austerities were practiced and taught by great masters. The textual references cited above mentioning illustrious *acāryas* who spent years of ascetic training at Kṛṣṇagiri before heading to the great *mahāvihāra* of north India and changing the course of Buddhist history confirm this picture.

The second visual reference to Kanheri in this copy of the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* appears on Folio 220v (Fig. 9). Here the illustration is labeled as a representation of the *pratyekabuddha śikhara caitya* at Kṛṣṇagiri. In this painting, the wilderness of the setting is perhaps more pronounced than in the previous one. The rocks and trees almost entirely cover the upper part of the illustration, while the focal *caitya* does not to appear to be enshrined in a structure but rather sitting outdoors beneath the thick vegetation. The monks are here represented in caves that do not resemble the monastic cells depicted in Folio 214. I would like to suggest that perhaps the *pratyekabuddha caitya* in this painting may be one of the *stūpas* erected at Kanheri in proximity to Cave 3 to commemorate the monastic dead, perhaps a memorial to a particularly relevant *pratyekabuddha* who pursued enlightenment at the site. The existence of a *khaḍga caitya* and a *pratyekabuddha caitya* at Kṛṣṇagiri confirm that this *mahāvihāra* was a major center for ascetic practices. *Pratyekabuddhas* resided in forests on mountains (Strong 1994: 48), as beautifully presented in the preamble to the Sanskrit *Khaḍgaviṣāṇagāthā* incorporated within the *Mahāvastu Avādana*. This text opens with the literary image of 500 *pratyekabuddhas* assembled in a forest, each reciting a *gāthā* of the text before entering *nirvāṇa* (Salomon 2007: 6).

From the references in the Nepalese *Prajñāpāramitāstotra*, we may conclude that towards the end of its active life, the Kanheri monastery became well-known as a Tantric center across the Buddhist world. The absence of esoteric images sculpted on the walls of the caves does not necessarily undermine the hypothesis that Kanheri was a major center for Buddhist esoteric practices. Tantric rituals generally relied heavily on the use of painted mandalas and portable images made of perishable materials, items that would leave few archaeological traces depending on the climate and materials involved. One can assume that wooden images were widely used in esoteric rituals at Kanheri, given the exceptional find of a multi-armed wooden image of Tārā (Gokhale 1991: Pl. 8), likely of local production. This small sculpture, in very poor condition of

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[13] Pāli: *Khaggavisāṇasutta* Sn 1.3; Skt: *Khaḍgaviṣāṇagāthā*; Gandhārī: *Khargaviṣaṇasutra*.

FIG. 10 Eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara.
Cave 41, Kanheri
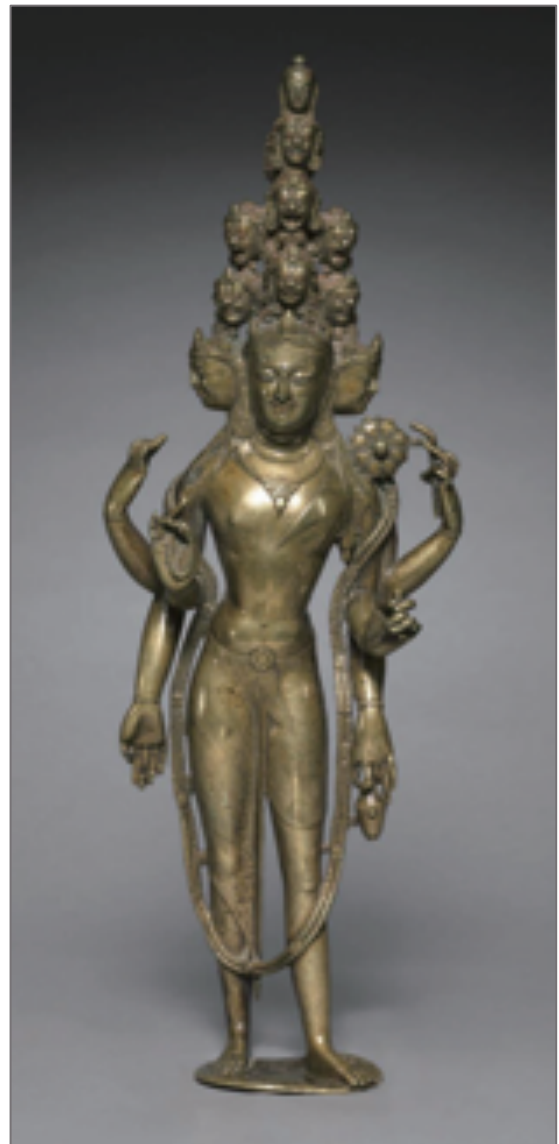Photo: Akira Shimada

FIG. 11
Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara.
ca. 1000, Western Himalayas
Gilt bronze with silver and copper inlay.
39.4 x 14 x 7.6cm (15½ x 5½ x 3in)
Cleveland Museum of Art, Acc. No. 1975.101

preservation and now unfortunately lost, shares distinctive iconographic features with Pala bronze images of this Buddhist deity dating to the 9th century.[14]

The representation in the porch of Cave 41 at Kanheri of an image of Avalokiteśvara *Ekadaśamukha* (Eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara) **(Fig. 10)**, an iconography of the bodhisattva not found elsewhere in western India, is the only example of esoteric stone sculpture from Kanheri. It probably dates to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa phase of activity at the monastery, and further connects the caves to the Himalayan regions where this esoteric iconography widely circulated through metal images in the 10th and 11th centuries. A portable gilt bronze of this bodhisattva from the western Himalayas dated to ca. 1000 CE, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art **(Fig. 11)**, offers a stylistic and iconographic counterpart to the Kanheri image and speaks for the artistic and religious exchange which occurred between Konkan and the Himalayan regions in the 11th century.

CONCLUSION

To close, the above evidence demonstrates that Kṛṣṇagiri/Kanheri was a very prominent Buddhist monastic center in the post-Gupta period when it came to be designated as a *mahāvihāra*. It included a *mahāgandhakuṭī* within its premises, colossal sculptures, and donors coming from as far as Sindh. The international reputation of the monastery grew further in the 9th century when the *Śrī Kṛṣṇagiri mahārāja mahāvihāra* rose to be a major institution for esoteric teachings, well-connected to the Buddhist circuits of the *mahāvihāras* of north India and the Himalayan regions, with renowned Tantric masters receiving training at the site. The two illuminations depicting Kṛṣṇagiri included in the aforementioned 11th-century manuscript from Nepal (CUL, Skt. Add. 1643, Folio 214v and Folio 220v) show how Konkan was a hub of esoteric Buddhism, with the highest concentration of Tantric centers for any region mentioned in the text. While it is hard to say if Kanheri was still an active center when this manuscript was illustrated, it was the only place illustrated twice in this source. This would suggest that it was one of the most pre-eminent and long-lived Buddhist monasteries in the western Deccan.

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[14] Sankalia first compared the Kanheri Tārā to a Pāla bronze from Nalanda (Sankalia 1987: 297). The Kanheri wooden sculpture also shares key features with a seated multi-armed Tara in bronze now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Acc. No. 1979.513. Accessed November 12, 2021. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38933.

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Between Normativity and Material Emptiness:
Indian Buddhist Monasteries and the
Chinese Buddhist Travelogues
In memory of Seishi Karashima (1957–2019)

Max Deeg (Cardiff University)

INTRODUCTION[1]

Almost 20 years ago, when I first turned my attention to what are usually called the Chinese 'pilgrim records' (although I am quite aware of the imperfect nature of this term; I prefer to call them 'Chinese Buddhist travelogues'), I did so (and am happy to confess this almost two decades later) with the rather naïve intention to supplement the scarce scriptural sources on Indian Buddhism, its practice, and its monastic life.[2] My expectation was that I would find in these sources a 'description' of Buddhism and Buddhist monastic life in India at the time when Chinese Buddhist monks like Faxian 法顯 (ca 365–425, travelled 399–412), Xuanzang 玄奘 (600/602–64, travelled 629–45) and Yijing 義淨 (635–713, travelled 671–95) — to name the usual triad of the most famous ones — were travelling and studying in India. A comprehensive study of the oldest of these records, the one by Faxian who travelled through and resided in India in the first decade of the 5th century CE, had already taught me that these texts are more complex than simply being straightforward eyewitness reports.[3] Questions of genre, intentionality, and audience — for whom

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[1] I would like to thank M.B. Rajani for sending and allowing me to reproduce her maps of Nalanda and her photograph of Vihāra 11 in Nalanda, and Laxshmi Greaves for letting me use her photograph of the Teḷhāra site network. Petra Kieffer-Pülz kindly sent me a copy of Gräfe's dissertation, and Bijoy Choudhary sent me his article on the 'lesser-known monasteries' of Bihar. Shayne Clarke helped me to get a copy of Iwata's article (2011) which was sent to him by Yao Fumi 八尾史 — thanks to both.

[2] The source situation and therefore the methods and result of reconstruction of early medieval and medieval monasticism in the context of Christianity is much better; see von Hinüber 2009: 869: "Everyday life in medieval European Christian monasteries is well known, partly by a well-documented literary tradition, partly by extant buildings and their inventory, sometimes even in use today…. In stark contrast, no Buddhist monastery from ancient India survives intact." The similarity of the description of early Buddhist and Christian monasticism has attracted the attention of early scholars of religions but has been mainly focused on speculations about the Buddhist influence on Christian monastic traditions; see Winter 2008.

[3] Deeg 2005a. I therefore cannot fully agree with von Hinüber's 2009: 870 optimistic view: "Luckily, there are some, if rare, contemporaneous witnesses, who saw and even lived in ancient Indian Buddhist monasteries, although it was not their primary interest to describe monastic life."

the records were written, and with what purpose or aims in mind — quickly played an important role when trying to interpret the sources. It is for this reason that I have avoided terms like 'described' or 'depicted' in the title while I used them in the abstract in quotation marks. In almost all cases, the 'descriptions' in the Chinese Buddhist travelogues are a mixture of on-the-ground observation, idealized or normative pieces of information, and imagination.

This *caveat* is not meant to discourage a critical and careful examination, which quite often leads to more sound results than the usual naïve reading of the sources (mostly based on the old English translations).[4] In relation to monastic life in Buddhist India, this can be shown quite clearly in the form of Yijing's 'description' in his *Nanhai-jigui-neifa-zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (*Record of the Inner Law Sent Back from the Southern Sea*).[5] Instead of being an eyewitness report on Indian Buddhist institutions, as usually assumed, the text mostly reflects the rules and practices 'codified' in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, the propagation of which Yijing was mainly interested in.[6] It is in fact in cases where Yijing adds his own commentarial notes and where he gives information diverting from the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* where we can get, with a comparative approach and careful interpretation, a glimpse into the actual institutional structures and practices.[7] Generally, however, a situation like this does considerably restrict the value of these texts for the reconstruction of the 'historical reality', as they are often, although not always, echoing their normative source, the *Vinaya*.

But even realizing these problems, I still did not want to give up the idea that other strands of sources may contain information about monastic life and monasteries and was redirected to the vast corpus of *Vinaya* texts,[8] only to discover that while these texts, at least on the surface, contain a great deal of information about monastic administration,[9] bedding, water jars, robes,[10] alms bowls and their proper use, the proper behavior of the monks while eating, walking, and begging,

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[4] While this is usually the case with identifications of places and/or historization of legends, it also had a strong impact on the reconstruction of Indian Buddhist monasticism and monasteries: for example, see recently Jha 2015.

[5] T.2125, hereafter 'Record of the Inner Law'; translations: Takakusu 1896, Li 2000.

[6] Fogelin 2015: 19 calls this a "reformist agenda". As an archaeologist, Fogelin clearly misjudges the Chinese records when he speaks of "the inevitable cultural misunderstandings of any foreign traveling to a distant land, wondering at seemingly mundane details." The reasons for a difference between the 'descriptions' in the travelogues and what the archaeologist sees *in situ* are to be looked for elsewhere.

[7] For this hermeneutical approach, see Deeg 2005b and 2018a, and much of the work of Gregory Schopen (e.g., 1997, 2004, 2014).

[8] For a survey of the different *Vinayas*, see Clarke 2015.

[9] The most comprehensive and critical study of this subject is Silk 2008, which simultaneously reflects the non-materiality and spatiality of the 'monastery' inhabited by the administrator / manager and the administrated / managed.

[10] See, for example, Anālayo and von Hinüber 2016 on the robes of the *bhikṣuṇīs*.

about hygiene,[11] and even about individual elements of buildings, such as windows and locks,[12] there is not much data to reconstruct the typological physical outlay of a Buddhist monastery.[13] In that sense, the context which Jonathan Silk has claimed for the reconstruction of Buddhist monasticism[14] is missing. Or to look at it from a more spatial angle in the context of recent theorizing about the relation between the *saṅgha* and laity,[15] the Buddhist monastery is oddly situated between (in a figurative sense) the centrality of the extreme sacred space represented by the *stūpa* or *caitya* and the non-monastic settlements.

What struck me next was the similar difficulty I had when reading archaeological reports on and interpretations of Buddhist monastic sites.[16] Except for the typical layout of monastic courtyards, in most cases not much data was available to reconstruct these sites against the backdrop of the literary sources. Apart from the clearly discernible monastic cells arranged into monastic courtyards, reflecting a certain degree of normativity themselves, where were all the other facilities which, according to the literary sources, must have existed: e.g., refectories, toilets, kitchens, storehouses, etc.? It seemed as if the *Vinaya*-related texts and sources like Yijing's *Record of the Inner Law* on the one hand and archaeology on the other reflected two completely different aspects of Buddhist monasticism which did not easily dovetail with one another. What struck me as well was the 'flat' nature of archaeological remains of monasteries: we apparently know next to nothing about the upper parts, the 'superstructure' as it were, of the buildings (upper floors, ceilings, roofs, decoration, etc.). For instance, while textual evidence implies that the residential buildings of bigger monasteries were at least two-storied (and more; see **Fig. 7**) and had tower-like structures at the four corners of the monastic courtyards and over the gates, archaeology unfortunately does not give many hints to such structures.

Another odd point is that of 'gender obscurity'.[17] Although it is assumed in most cases that

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[11] See Heirman and Torck 2012.

[12] See von Hinüber 1992.

[13] In a way, I was — and still am — in the same position as many other scholars who have tried to reconstruct monasticism from the textual sources where the question of residential development was usually treated in a very short and an almost 'fundamentalist' way, claiming that early Buddhist monks were mendicants and did not live in solidly built monasteries. See Hardy 1860: 129ff but also later scholars like, for instance, Dutt 1984: 90ff and 1988: 45ff; Mitra 1980: 30ff; and Wijayaratna 1990: 18ff.

[14] Silk 2008: v: "Understanding is possible only in context; things signify only in relation to other things. Despite this indisputable and obvious fact, far too many studies in Buddhism attempt to approach its worlds of thought and practice without regard for their institutional contexts." One could add here: things signify only in relation to the space in which they are positioned.

[15] Often the monastery in its materiality is by presumption reified without much critical reflection: see, for example, Bailey and Mabbett 2003.

[16] I recall my first encounter with the archaeological depiction of an Indian Buddhist monastery in Mitra (1980: 39, Fig. 10), which shows the plan of the monastery at Jaulian, Taxila, with bathroom, assembly hall, storeroom, kitchen, scullery, refectory, and toilet (see **Fig. 1**).

[17] "Virtually nothing is known about the relationships in early India between Buddhist male monasteries

the sites found and excavated are monasteries for monks, it seems strange that there are so few clear cases of nunneries.[18] While the dearth of reference to these institutions is understandable in the case of the Chinese travellers Faxian, Xuanzang, etc., because of their gender-biased approach,[19] a parallel omission in archaeological considerations of South Asia is a little bit surprising, particularly since we have clear evidence of a well-organized and regulated *bhikṣuṇī saṅgha* in India not only through the different *bhikṣuṇī Vinaya*s in Chinese[20] and Tibetan but also in the Indic languages of Pāli[21] (although historically no *bhikkhunīsaṅgha* existed for centuries in the areas dominated by the Theravāda traditions 'using' the so-called Pāli *Vinaya*) and Sanskrit (Mahāsāṅghika–Lokottaravāda).[22]

So, the disappointing starting point must be — using Gregory Schopen's words and applying them to the special case of Buddhist monasteries — that it is "painfully obvious that most of those 'established facts' [in the history of Indian Buddhism] totter precariously on very fragile foundations."[23] In our specific case of Buddhist monasteries, the problem lies in the biased angle of our sources. Archaeology does not supply final and sufficient information, the *Vinaya* has a prescriptive–normative point of view, and the travelogues are a mixture of observation, wishful thinking and idealization, sometimes trying to match the information given in the *Vinayas*. Thus, the question to be addressed here will be: how can we bring into fruitful and critical 'conversation' the triangle of these sources: archaeology, *Vinaya* texts, and other 'descriptions'? The answer will certainly not be discarding texts, two corners of the triangle, nor a negligence of archaeology. Rather, it may be sought carefully, step by step, by means of a reinterpretation through and beyond the normative and idealizing ductus of the text and a careful reading of these sources against the scant and 'flat' archaeological data.[24] While I have to leave a qualified discussion of the latter to

(*vihāras*) and female nunneries (*varṣakas, upassayas*) as institutions." (Schopen 2014: 73).

18 See Kaushik 2017, particularly 42–92.

[19] This biased nature of the Chinese Buddhist historiographical sources (including the Buddhist travelogues) — the lack of the appearance of nuns, with the exception of the *Biqiuni-zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (*Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs*). T.2063 — has, as far as I know, not been sufficiently contextualized.

[20] For a translation and study of the *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya* of the Dharmaguptaka, see Heirman 2002; for the Theravāda tradition, see Hüsken 1997.

[21] Hüsken 1997.

[22] Roth 1970; Nolot 1991. An English translation of the Chinese translation is Hirakawa 1982.

[23] Schopen 1991: 187.

[24] For such an implicit suggestion, see e.g., Fogelin 2003: 328: "Previous interpretations of Early Buddhist monasticism rested upon readings of Buddhist monastic texts, and archaeological excavations of monasteries in isolation." See also Fogelin 2006: 199. More explicit is von Hinüber 2009: 870: "It is, therefore, evident ... that it does require a certain amount of effort to collect material [in] the available literature in [the] form of books and inscriptions, from the monuments and from archaeological finds. Still, when different sources are carefully sifted and combined, it is not impossible to extract some details on daily life and to gather information which they were never meant to convey."

the archaeologist,[25] I would like to discuss here, at least, examples from the other two strands of sources: the *Vinaya* and the travelogues.

MONASTERIES IN THE VINAYA SOURCES

I would like to start the discussion of the textual sources with some examples from the *Vinayas*. *Vinaya* texts deal mostly with the question of how an individual monk and a group of monks, the *saṅgha*, are supposed to act and interact. The question of in which concrete and spatial context this should occur is rarely addressed, much less answered; passages where the physical structure of the monastery is described are predominantly 'collateral' pieces of information given in the context of the regulation of monastic life. Even in cases when the sources make a distinction of different monastic environments, like the one between the 'forest-dwelling' (*āraṇyakavāsin*) and 'village-dwelling' (*grāmikavāsin*) communities, a description of how these two obviously different types of monastic communities organized themselves spatially and physically is not fully addressed.[26] In other words, we are not really told how monasteries in which all these regulated activities took place were supposed to look. References to the architectural layout and structure of Buddhist monasteries in *Vinaya* texts are astonishingly rare and are often only made in passing.

Vinaya texts give references of different quantity and quality to the structure of a monastery. While the material in the Pāli (Theravāda) *Vinaya* has been studied in some detail by Gräfe (1974), the Chinese translations of the *Vinayas* of the different *nikāya*s — and these are, apart from the *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya* of the Mahāsāṅghika and the Tibetan translation of the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin, the only other comprehensive *Vinaya* texts we have — have not been investigated in the same systematic way. One important text preserved in an Indian language is/are the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* of the Mahāsāṅghika–Lokottaravādin, made fully accessible through the admirable work of Seishi Karashima (2012). This contains quite a lot of practical details about monastic structures and buildings which can be compared with the 'descriptions' of monasteries in Chinese travelogues and other texts as well as being read against the archaeological findings.[27]

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[25] One should add here to the art historian, as far as depictions of monastic structures in reliefs (e.g., Sanchi, Bharhut, Amaravati) and paintings (e.g., Ajanta) are concerned. In the narrative pictorials of the donation of the Jetavana, for instance, art historians have mostly concentrated on the 'action' and not so much on the architectural details; see, for instance, Zin 2010. An exception includes Meister 2007, particularly 7–14 (I have to thank Akira Shimada for bringing this article to my attention).

[26] A rare exception is found in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* where it is stated that the cells (*pariveṇa*) of a monastic dwelling in the forest (*āraṇyaka*) are distant (*dūra*) from each other while the ones in or near a settlement (*grāmāntika*) are next to each other (*āsanna*) (Karashima 2012/1: 100f). But in the chapter about the two different types of monasteries (Karashima 2012/2: 293ff), not much is said about their structure or layout. Does this allow us to conclude that there was no difference between them? Probably not, but the texts give minimal testimony of these differences.

[27] It should be kept in mind, however, that *Vinaya* texts can have a regional 'flavor'. Oskar von Hinüber (in Karashima 2012/1: XIII f) has rightly pointed out that some features in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ*

As already pointed out, if we are turning to the literary sources, both travelogues and *Vinayas*, not much is said about the broader and architectural outline of Indian Buddhist monasteries, but quite a lot of information is available about the organizational and material nitty-gritty of Buddhist monastic life, mostly but not exclusively about correct behaviour and everyday life practice. In the *Vinaya*, this information is *per nature* normative and descriptive. As Shayne Clarke emphasizes, it "transmit[s] an 'in-house vision' of what monks and nuns should and were thought to do, and how they ought to behave."[28] Clarke continues by reminding us: "Of course, this is not to be confused with what in fact monks and nuns did, and how they behaved." In fact, some of the rules imply that regulation was necessary because there were transgressions and divergent practices.

One could also apply the cautious and critical approach favored by Clarke to the few Chinese text passages which describe the physical layout and structures of Buddhist monasteries. They reflect how the authors imagined or chose to project an ideal or idealized monastery in which monastic life, following more or less the prescriptive–normative structure given by the *Vinayas*, could function in a similarly ideal(ized) way.[29] They also reflect a relatively late developmental phase of Buddhist monasteries.[30] However, in terms of archaeological remains or coming from a more anthropological perspective, reflected in present monastic settings in different Buddhist cultures and countries, in great part they do not reflect monasteries as we find them on the ground and, as it were, in 'working condition'.[31]

The same then is also true for the 'descriptions' of monasteries in the *Vinayas*: they represent a normative view on monasteries which is probably informed to a certain extent by the typical layout of a monastery at the time when the respective *Vinaya* passage was composed and integrated into wider corpus of the text.[32] The function of placing everything into the lifetime of the

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(heating facilities, direction of the wind, writing material, dialect forms of words — one could add the mention of toilets built at a steep slope, Skt *prapātaniśrita*) reflects a northwestern context.

[28] Clarke 2014: 11.

[29] von Hinüber 2009: 870 clearly states this situation: "The only exception [to the abundance of doctrinal and philosophical sources: M.D.], of course, is the equally rich *Vinaya* literature, which, however, describes the norm rather than the real life...." See also Shimada 2009: 218 and 2013: 173f.

[30] See Kieffer-Pülz 2000: 322: "The *Vinayas* of the different schools reflect a developmental phase during which residency in solid buildings was already the rule." ("Die Vinayas der verschiedenen Schulen spiegeln eine Entwicklungsstufe wieder, auf der die Unterkunft in festen Gebäuden bereits die Regel war.") See also Gräfe 1974: 47ff.

[31] I will have to leave aside here the monastic cave sites in western central India — and in a way mirrored by the comparable structures found along the northern Silk Road (Kizil, Tumshuq, Bezeklik, etc.) — not only because of their special typological nature but also just because there is not much description of such sites in the Chinese sources, except perhaps for Ajanta.

[32] Although I subscribe to an 'evolutionary' view of Buddhist literature which assumes that a text changes over time through additions and extensions, not very surprisingly to the specialist, I will avoid a discussion of the problems linked with the development of Buddhist 'canonical' literature of which the

Buddha gives the *Vinaya's* normativity the authority of the founder, but, seen from an historical standpoint, particularly highlights the anachronistic nature of the material aspects described in these texts: the *status quo* of such an anachronistic 'description'[33] is not the one of the lifetime of the Buddha but of a later period.

The 'standard' narrative of the foundation of a Buddhist monastery at the time of the Buddha which contains 'descriptive' elements of how such a monastery looked is that of the foundation and construction of the Jetavana monastery in Śrāvastī.[34] According to the *Vinaya* and other texts, the Jetavana monastery was purchased from the Kosala prince Jeta (Skt Jetṛ) and given to the Buddha and the *saṅgha* by the rich merchant Anāthapiṇḍada (Pāli Anāthapiṇḍika).[35] I give here the well-known narrative from the version in the Pāli *Cullavagga* (2.158f).

> Now at that time, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika had many friends, had many companions, his words had to be taken [seriously]. Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, having concluded that business at Rājagaha, set out for Sāvatthi. Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika enjoined people on the way, saying: "Oh noble ones! Build pleasure groves (*ārāma*), erect monasteries (*vihara*), furnish gifts; an Awakened One has arisen in the world, and this Lord, invited by me, will come along by this road." Then these people, urged on by the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, built pleasure groves, erected monasteries, furnished gifts. Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, having arrived at Sāvatthi, looked all around Sāvatthi, thinking: "Now where could the Lord stay that would be neither too far from a village nor too near, suitable for coming and going, accessible to

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Vinayas are, of course, an essential part.

[33] In the visual representation of this narrative in Buddhist art, as for instance at Bharhut, there is a narrative anachronistic element insofar as the structures of a monastery are shown before or during the process of purchase.

[34] This is exemplified by the fact that many *sūtras* have been preached in this monastery in Śrāvastī where the Buddha spent 19 rainy seasons. On the literary and conceptional process behind this frequency, see Schopen 2004: 395ff. The Jetavana was, of course, not the first donation of property to the Buddha and the *saṅgha*. The standard biographies narrate that briefly after the conversion of the three Kāśyapa brothers, King Bimbisāra of Rājagṛha donated the Bamboo Grove (Veṇuvana / Zhuyuan 竹園) to the Buddha. Following this narrative logic, the *Sarvāstivādavinaya / Shisong-lü* 十誦律 of the Sarvāstivādin has Anāthapiṇḍada (Jigudu 給孤獨) and Śāriputra (Shelifu 舍利弗), who is put in charge of supervising the construction of the Jetavana by the Buddha, follow the model of the Veṇuvana, with its teaching halls (*jiangtang* 講堂), steam house (*wenshi* 溫室), refectory (*shitang* 食堂), kitchen (*zuoshichu* 作食處), bath house (*xiyuchu* 洗浴處), gate room (*menwu* 門屋), meditation place (*zuochanchu* 坐禪處), and toilets (*cechu* 廁處) (T.1435.244b.24ff, with slightly different terminology repeated at 244b.29f). See similarly in the *Mahīśāsakavinaya / Wufen-lü* 五分律 (T.1421.167b.18f) which also lists a place for walking in meditation (*xingxingchu* 經行處) and residential buildings (*fangshe* 房舍) in addition to teaching halls, a steam house, refectory, and bath house. In the *Mahāsāṅghikavinaya / Mohesengqi-lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (T.1425) and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya / Sifen-lü* 四分律 (T.1428), no specific buildings are mentioned.

[35] Malalasekara 1974/I: 963, s.v. 1. Jetavana. For a discussion of the different versions of this story in the *Vinayas*, see Iwata 2004. For the most recent excavation report, see Kansai University 1997.

people whenever they wanted, not crowded by day, having little noise at night, little sound, without folks' breath, secluded from people, fitting for meditation?" Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika saw Prince Jeta's pleasure grove, neither too far from a village ... fitting for meditation, and seeing it, he approached Prince Jeta. Having approached, he spoke thus to Prince Jeta: "Give me, oh noble son, the park, the pleasure grove to make [a monastery]." "The pleasure grove is not to be given away, householder, even for a price of a hundred thousand." "O noble son! The pleasure grove is taken." "The pleasure grove is not taken, householder." They asked the chief ministers of justice, saying: "Is it taken or is it not taken?" The chief ministers spoke thus: "The pleasure grove is taken at the price fixed by you, oh noble son!" Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, having had gold brought out by means of wagons, had Jeta's Grove spread with the price of a hundred thousand. The gold that was taken out the first time was not enough for a small open space near the gate storage.[36] Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika enjoined the people, saying: "Go, indeed, and bring gold — I will spread this on the open space."

Then it occurred to Prince Jeta: "This will be no minor [matter] that this householder gives away so much gold." And he said to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika: "Enough, oh householder, let me spread [gold] over this open space, give me this open space [and] it will be my gift." Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, thinking: "This Prince Jeta is a distinguished, well-known man; surely the trust towards this *dhamma* and discipline of well-known men like this is very powerful", and he gave this free space to Prince Jeta. Then Prince Jeta built a gate storage on this open space.

The householder Anāthapiṇḍika had monastic dwellings (*vihāra*) made in Jeta's Grove, had cells (*pariveṇa*) made, had storages (*koṭṭhaka*) made, had assembly halls (*upaṭṭhānasālā*) made,[37] had fire-rooms (*aggisālā*) made,[38] had buildings

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[36] Buddhaghosa's commentary defines this term (*koṭṭhaka*) as a "seven-storied gate storage mansion" (*sattabhūmika[ṃ] dvārakoṭṭhakapāsāda[ṃ]*: Takakusu and Nagai 1982/6: 1221. Karashima 2012/1: 17 translates *dvārakoṣthaka* in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* as "Torhaus" (see also Gräfe 1974: 58f). Horner translates it as "porch", but this is clearly incorrect since the text here obviously refers to a structure that had not yet been built and not to an annex of an already existing building.

[37] The *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* instructs that the *poṣadha* ceremony (fortnightly recitation of the rules of conduct) can take place in different places of the monastery, including in an *upasthānaśālā* (Karashima 2012/1: 7) which Karashima translates, following Gräfe 1974: 57f, as "*Mehrzweckgebäude*" ('multi-purpose building'). The two other buildings are the 'meditation hall' (*prahāṇaśālā*) and a pavilion (*maṇḍalamāḍa*). The Chinese parallel, the *Weiyi-fa* 威儀法 in the Chinese translation of the *Mahāsāṅghikavinaya* (T.1425), does not refer to these specific buildings but has, very generally, the expression 'certain places' (*mouchu* 某處).

[38] Gräfe 1974: 56 thinks that this is a building which housed the 'sacred fire' (?), but it is more likely to be a term corresponding to the Chinese *wenshi* 溫室, which I translate as 'steam house' since this term is used in the Chinese translations of the *Vinayas* in relation to keeping the monks warm, hygiene, shaving, etc.

for preparing lawful food (*kappiyakuṭī*) made,[39] had toilets (*vaccakuṭī*) made,[40] had paths for walking in meditation (*caṅkama*) made, had halls for paths for walking in meditation (*caṅkamanosālā*) made,[41] had wells (*udapāna*) made,[42] had halls for wells (*udapānasālā*) made,[43] had bathing rooms (*jantāghara*) made,[44] had halls for bathing rooms (*jantāgharasālā*) made, had ponds (*pokkharaṇī*) made,[45] had tents (*maṇḍapa*) made.[46][47]

In this passage, we get some concrete information about the architectural–functional elements of a fully fledged monastic complex. It is worth noting that Anāthapiṇḍika knows exactly how to build the monastery without receiving instructions from the Buddha, as one would expect.

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[39] *kalpiya-kuṭiyā* and other forms of the term in the *Abhisamācārikadharmāḥ*: see Karashima 2012/1: 17, n.3 and Gräfe 1974: 58.

[40] See also *varcakuṭī* in the *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya* of the Mahāsāṅghika–Lokottaravādin: Roth 1970: 318.

[41] There obviously were *caṅkrama(ṇapātha)* (Skt) which were open air and ones with roofs — the *śālā* of the text (Gräfe 1974: 59f).

[42] Gräfe 1974: 57 describes three different types of wells.

[43] The *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* has the term *pānīyamaṇḍapa*: Karashima 2012/2: 309ff translates it as "*Wasserpavillon*"; is this the same as an *udapānasālā*?

[44] Or *jentāka* (Roth 1970: 318). For a detailed description, see Gräfe 1974: 60f.

[45] Gräfe 1974: 61 describes this as a swimming pool.

[46] It is not really clear what a *maṇḍapa* is, but it seems to be a more solid building (of a round shape?) than a hut: see Gräfe 1974: 49f, 62f.

[47] 158f. *Tena kho samayena Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati bahumitto hoti, bahusahāyo ādeyyavāco. atha kho Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati Rājagahe taṃ karaṇīyaṃ tīretvā yena Sāvatthi tena pakkāmi. atha kho Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati antarā magge manusse āṇāpesi: ārāme ayyo karotha vihāre patiṭṭhāpetha dānāni paṭṭhāpetha, buddho loke uppanno so ca mayā bhagavā nimantito iminā maggena āgacchissatīti. atha kho te manussā Anāthapiṇḍikena gahapatinā uyyojitā ārāme akaṃsu vihāre patiṭṭhāpesuṃ dānāni paṭṭhāpesuṃ. atha kho Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati Sāvatthiṃ gantvā samantā Sāvatthiṃ anuvilokesi: kattha nu bhagavā vihareyya yaṃ assa gāmato n'eva avidūre na accāsanne gamanāgamanasampannaṃ atthikānaṃ-atthikānaṃ manussānaṃ abhikkamanīyaṃ divā appākiṇṇaṃ rattiṃ appasaddaṃ appanigghosaṃ vijanavātaṃ manussarāhaseyyakaṃ paṭisallānasāruppan ti. addasā kho Anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati Jeto kumāro ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā Jetaṃ kumāraṃ etad avoca: dehi me ayyaputta uyyānaṃ ārāmaṃ kātun ti. adeyyo gahapati ārāmo api koṭisantharenā 'ti. gahito ayyoputta ārāmo 'ti. na gahapati gahito ārāmo 'ti. gahito na gahito 'ti vohārike mahāmate pucchiṃsu. mahāmattā evaṃ āhaṃsu: yato tayā ayyaputta aggho kato gahito ārāmo 'ti. atha kho Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati sakaṭehi hiraññaṃ nibbāhāpetvā Jetavanaṃ koṭisantharam santharāpesi. sakiṃ nīhataṃ hiraññaṃ thokassa okāsassa koṭṭhakaṃ sāmantā na ppahoti. atha kho Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati manusse āṇāpesi: gacchatha bhaṇe hiraññaṃ āharatha, imaṃ okāsaṃ santharissāmīti. atha kho Jetassa kumārassa etad ahosi: na kho idaṃ orakaṃ bhavissati yathāyaṃ gahapati tāva bahuṃ hiraññaṃ pariccajātīti, Anāthapiṇḍikaṃ gahapatiṃ etad avoca: alaṃ gahapati m' etaṃ okāsaṃ santharāpesi, dehi me etaṃ okāsaṃ, mam' etaṃ dānaṃ bhavissatīti. atha kho Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati ayaṃ kho Jeto kumāro abhiññāto ñātamanusso. mahiddhiyo kho pana evarūpānaṃ ñātamanussānaṃ imasmiṃ dhammavinaye pasādo 'ti taṃ okāsaṃ Jetassa kumārassa pādāsi. atha kho Jeto kumāro tasmiṃ okāse koṭṭhakaṃ māpesi. atha kho Anāthapiṇḍako gahapati Jetavane vihara kārāpesi, pariveṇāni kārāpesi, koṭṭhake kārāpesi, upaṭṭhānasālāyo k., aggisālāyo k., kappiyakuṭiyo k., vaccakuṭiyo k., caṅkame k., caṅkamanosālāyo k., udapāne k., udapānasālāyo k., janthāghare k., jantāgharasālāyo k., pokkharaṇiyo k., maṇḍape kārāpesi.* My translation is based on Horner 2001: 221ff.
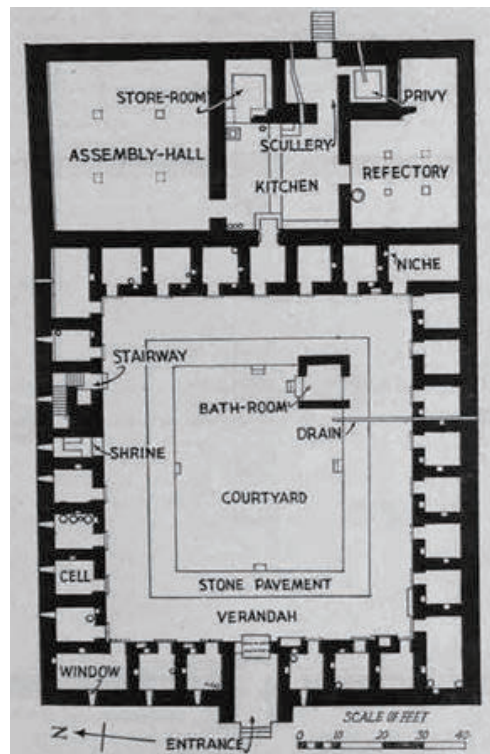
FIG. 1 Map of the monastery at Jaulian.
Source: Mitra 1980: 39, Fig. 10

FIG. 2 Holes for ceiling beams (?), Monastery 1, Nalanda.
Photograph: author

This 'defect' —from a strict *Vinaya* standpoint — is corrected in the concurring legend found in the *Śayanāsanavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin[48] of how the first Buddhist monastery was founded by another layman instructed by the Buddha. This story seems to reflect a tendency to have the first monastery established as early as possible after the ordination of the first members of the *saṅgha*, the five ascetics around Kauṇḍinya (*pañcakāḥ* ('group of five'), translated by Schopen as 'the first five monks') who became monks after the Buddha's first sermon at Sārnāth.

> When the Blessed One had trained the first five monks, they lived in the forests, but while living there, they were vulnerable to lions, tigers, leopards, and hyenas. The Blessed One then thought to himself: "Where have the disciples of past Fully and Completely Awakened Buddhas made their homes?" He saw it was in a *vihāra*. The gods also told the Blessed One that it was so. At that time, there was a householder named Kalyāṇabhadra living in Vārāṇasī. This idea occurred to him, since his disposition was enlivened by his roots of good: "I, indeed, should have a *vihāra* built for the disciples of the Blessed One!" He got up at daybreak and went to the Blessed One. When he had arrived and shown deference with his head to the feet of the Blessed One, he sat down at one end of the assembly. While he was seated at one end of the assembly, the Blessed One, through talk about Dharma, led the householder Kalyāṇabhadra to see. He inspired, incited, and delighted him. When he had led him to see through various sorts of talk about Dharma, had inspired, incited and delighted him, the Blessed One was silent. Then the householder Kalyāṇabhadra got up from his seat, put his upper robe over one shoulder, made the gesture of supplication to the Blessed One, and said to him: "If the Blessed One were to order it, I would have a *vihāra* built for the disciples of the Blessed One." The Blessed One said: "Therefore, householder, I order it. Have one built!" But Kalyāṇabhadra did not know what sort he should have built. The Blessed One said: "If you have one with three cells (*trilayana*) built, the Perfume Chamber (*gandhakuṭi*) must be built in the middle, the two other cells on each side.[49] It is the same for one with three sides and nine cells. In a four-sided one, the Perfume Chamber is in the middle of the far wall facing the entrance hall (*dvārakoṣṭhaka*) and there are two cells, one on each side of the entrance!" He did not know how many levels must be built. The Blessed One said: "For monks, a *vihāra* must be built with five levels (*pañcapura*), a Perfume Chamber with seven levels, a summer room over the entrance (*bālāgrapotika*) with seven. But for nuns, a *vihāra* must be built with three levels, a Perfume Chamber with five, and a summer room over the entrance with five![50]

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[48] *Śayanāsanavastu. Vinayavastu* 15. Unfortunately, this is one of the *vastu*s missing in Yijing's extant translation of the *Vinaya*: see Clarke 2015: 75.

[49] It is doubtful that *layana* (Pāli *leṇa*) means an individual 'cell' here. Rather, I assume that the term refers in this instance to a residential complex (courtyard?), in which case the *gandhakuṭi* (as a multi-story building) has to be erected in (or above) the central complex of the three.

[50] *yadā bhagavatā pañcakā vinītās te araṇye prativasanti; te araṇye prativasanto āgamyā bhavanti siṃhānāṃ vyāghrāṇāṃ dvīpināṃ tarakṣūṇām. bhagavān saṃlakṣayati: kutra pūrvakāṇāṃ*

The odd point of this story in narrative terms is, of course, that it tells the reader about the foundation of a monastery before the existence of a proper *saṅgha*. In terms of the inner logic, the story is anachronistic since the size of the monasteries described is neither for the five monks nor was there at that time, according to the standard biographical narrative, a nun order for which the regulations about nunneries would have applied.[51] It seems as if the Mūlasarvāstivādins wanted to transfer the information about the structure of a monastery, given in the Jetavana narrative in the Pāli version (which itself follows immediately after this story in the *Śayanāsanavastu*) to a very early period of the *saṅgha*'s existence and have this regulated by the Buddha himself. The information given is more about the size and hierarchy of the building than about the different functional parts.[52]

The architectural structures described in the two passages above refer to a well-organized and structured monastic complex which certainly reflects a later stage of fully fledged Buddhist monasticism. As in a number of cases, the terms referring to material culture used in the texts are not completely clear.[53] We need a clearer understanding of the terminology, but this is not an easy task in the light of the differences between the different *Vinayas*, the lack of commentarial literature, and a lack of clear evidence from objects of material culture (images, archaeological evidence).

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samyaksaṃbuddhānāṃ śrāvakā āvāsaṃ kalpitavantaḥ? paśyati vihāre; devatābhir apy evaṃ bhagavata ārocitam tena khalu samayena Vārāṇasyāṃ Kalayāṇabhadro nāma gṛhapatiḥ prativasati; tasya kuśalamūlapratibodhitasantater etad abhavat; aho batāhaṃ bhagavataḥ śrāvakāṇaṃ vihāraṃ kārayeyam iti; sa kālyam evotthāya yena bhagavāṃs tenopasaṃkrāntaḥ; upasaṃkramya bhagavataḥ pādau śirasā vanditvaikānte niṣaṇṇaḥ; ekāntaniṣaṇṇaṃ Kalyāṇabhadrikaṃ gṛhapatiṃ bhagavān dharmyayā kathayā saṃdarśayati samādāpayati samuttejayati saṃpraharṣayati; anekaparyāyeṇa dharmyayā kathayā saṃdarśya samādāpya samuttejya saṃpraharṣya tūṣṇīm; atha Kalyāṇabhadriko gṛhapatir utthāyāsanād ekāṃsam uttarāsaṃgaṃ kṛtvā yena bhagavāṃs tenāṃjaliṃ praṇamya bhagavantam ieam avocat: yadi bhagavān anujānīyād ahaṃ bhagavataḥ śrāvakāṇāṃ vihāraṃ karayeyam iti; bhagavān āha; tasmād gṛhapate anujānāmi kāraya iti; sa na jānīte kīdṛśaḥ kārayitavya iti; bhagavān āha: yadi trilayanaṃ kārayasi madhye gandhakuṭiḥ kārayitavyā dvayoḥ pārśvayor dve layane; evaṃ triśāle nava layanāni; catuḥśāle madhye dvārakoṣṭhakābhimukhaṃ gandhakuṭiḥ; dvārakoṣṭhakapārśvayor dve layane; sa na jānīte kati purāḥ kartavyā iti; bhagavān āha: bhikṣūṇāṃ pañcapurā vihārāḥ kartavyāḥ saptapurā gandhakuṭiḥ; saptapūrā bālāgrapotikāḥ; bhikṣūṇīnāṃ tu tripurā vihārāḥ kartavyāḥ; paṃcapurā gandhakuṭiḥ; paṃcapurā bālāgrapotikā iti.

Skt text GRETIL: http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/4_rellit/buddh/vinv15_u.htm. Accessed March 12, 2020. After Gnoli's 1978 edition; translation by Schopen 2000: 108f. For Japanese translations — which do, however, neither translate the specific architectural terms nor follow Schopen — see Iwata 2004: 47f, n.8 and 2011: 111f.

[51] See also Iwata 2004: 48, n. 8.

[52] Similarly, the Jetavana story in the *Shisong-lü* has Prince Jeta build the gate room (*menwu* 門屋) and Anāthapiṇḍada the 16 great multi-story pavilion (*da-chongge* 大重閣) and 16 'caves' (*kuwu* 窟屋: direct translation of Skt *layana*, Pāli *leṇa*) (T.1435.244c.26ff.)

[53] For different translations and interpretations of the terms, see Law 1935: 23f; Dutt 1984: 150f and 1988: 64; Gräfe 1974: 47ff; and Kieffer-Pülz 2000: 325f.

There are similar buildings mentioned in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* in the context of the *poṣadha* ceremony: meditation halls (*prahāṇaśālā*), assembly halls (*upasthānaśālā*), pavilions (*maṇḍalamāḍa*), 'isolated' places (*occhedaka*),[54] meditation path (*caṃkrama*).[55] The same text gives control to an overseer (*śayyāsanaprajñāka*, Chin *fenfang-ren* 分房人, 'distributor of rooms') who obviously is in control of a number of monastic buildings, such as the following.

- monastic compounds (*vihāra*)[56]
- cells (*pariveṇa*)
- steam room (or kitchen?) (*agniśālā*),
- refectory (*bhaktaśālā*)[57]
- assembly hall (*upasthānaśālā*)
- door house (*dvārakoṣṭhaka*)
- toilet (*varccakuṭī*)[58]
- well (*udupāna*)
- bath (*jantāka*)
- meditation paths (*caṃkramā*)
- places at the foot of a tree (*vṛkṣamūla*)
- residences (for several monks? *vihāraka*)[59]

Some monasteries also seem to have had drains (*udakabhrama*).[60] Some of these buildings, such as the kitchen and assembly hall, seem to have been quite big (*mahāntāni vastūni*).[61]

Despite this data, we hardly know anything about the layout of the different parts of the monastery. Again, it is the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* which gives one of the few examples for the position of these components — in this case, of the toilets.[62]

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[54] These seem to be places which are separated from the open spaces in the monastery. Karashima 2012/1: 13 opines that they are spaces confined by curtains or are tents. In another list, the foot of a tree (*vṛkṣamūla*) is mentioned in the context of the monastery (Karashima 2012/1: 99); this could be one of these places.

[55] Karashima 2012/1: 17. Once again, the Chinese parallel is very unspecific. Note that variants (here, *caṃkrama* instead of *caṅkrama*) are not unusual.

[56] The juxtaposition of *vihārā* and *pariveṇikā* in the plural suggests that *vihāra* here means monastic courtyards while the later *vihāraka* refers to other residential structures, a distinction similar to the one which Gräfe 1974: 50ff makes between small and big *vihāra*s.

[57] Called *bhaktāgra* elsewhere in the text or *bhojanaśālā* in Pāli.

[58] See Gräfe 1974: 63. Elsewhere (49), Gräfe translates *kuṭī* as *Hütte* ('hut') which would be a rather unstable and temporary structure, but some *kuṭī*s, such as the kitchens (*kappiyakuṭī*), were certainly more solid structures. The *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* describes the toilets (*varccakuṭī*) as a round or rectangular building with roofs made of bricks or stones (Karashima 2012/1: 135ff) which requires a quite solid substructure.

[59] See Karashima 2012/1: 99, n. 4.

[60] Karashima 2012/1: 105. The Chinese parallel has the term *shuidu* 水瀆. Another term for this is *praṇālibhrama* (Karashima 2012/1: 109f).

[61] Karashima 2012/1: 119.

[62] The *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* distinguishes between toilets for defecation and pissoirs (*praśvākuṭī*)

The Bhagavat said: "One then should build a toilet building. Now if a monk has a toilet building built [for himself], it is not appropriate to build it east or north of the residential [part of the monastery]. One should build it rather south or west of the residential [part of the monastery and] avoid the path of the wind[63]. ..."[64]

The toilets were quite complex buildings with an extension (*varccakuṭikā*) for washing oneself after having used the toilet and another structure (*kuṭī* or *śālā*) for keeping the robes while using the toilet.[65]

There is also some indication in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* that not all monks had fixed residential rooms in the monastic courtyards, and also that cells were shared.[66]

If [the disciple] is entitled to a residence, he should ask for permission: "I accept this residence." But if [he] is entitled to a residence together with someone else, [his] master should find out [about him]. If he has a lax and sumptuous [behaviour], wants to return [to a mundane life], does not wish to learn, [the master] should say: "Do not accept [the residence] so that [you] will not be corrupted by communion [with him]." But [if he] is pleasant, virtuous, and wishes to learn, [the master] should say: "Accept [the residence]."[67]

The sharing of cells or residences is also clearly regulated in the same text.[68]

And now [if] cells are rare, one cell should be assigned to two or three people. [If cells] still are rare, one cell should be assigned to four or five people.[69]

(Karashima 2012/1: 159). This description of a well-organized monastic hygiene 'concept' is different from other *Vinaya* passages, according to which the bodily waste (of nunneries) was disposed over the wall of the monastery (Schopen 2014: 23–30). In his description, Yijing focuses instead on the right procedures in the toilets; see Wang 2009a: 118–21 and Li 2000: 88–91.

[63] Karashima 2012/1: 135 translates (*die Himmelsrichtung), aus der der Wind weht* ("(the direction) whence the wind blows"), but *vātapatha* may mean more literally the places inside of the monastery (corridors?) where the wind has free passage and would spread the smell inside of the monastery.

[64] *bhagavān āha / "tena hi varccakuṭī nāma karttavyā. / varccakuṭī dāni bhikṣuṇā kārāpayamāṇena nâpi kṣamati vihārasya purastimena vā uttāreṇa vā kārāpayitum. / atha khalu dakṣiṇena vā paścimena vā kārāpayitavyā / vātapathaṃ muktvā. ..."* (Karashima 2012/1: 134f).

[65] Karashima 2012/1: 136ff.

[66] Yijing comments about the correct distribution of the cells according to the hierarchy of the members of the *saṅgha*: Wang 2009a: 112 and Li 2000: 83.

[67] *yadi vihāro prāpuṇati, / āpṛcchitavyaṃ / "amukaṃ vihāraṃ gṛhṇāmi" / atha dāni dvitīyena saha prāpuṇati vihāra, upādhyāyena jānitavyaṃ / yadi so bhavati śaithiliko vā bāhuliko vā avaḍḍhako vâsikṣākāmo, vaktavyaṃ / "mā gṛhṇa. mā saṃsarggadoṣo bhaviṣyatî"ti / atha dāni bhavati / bhadrako guṇavān śikṣākāmo, vaktavyo "gṛhṇa"* (Karashima 2012/1: 76f). The context and the Chinese parallel (*fang* 房, *fangshe* 房舍) make it clear that *vihāra* here means 'room, cell'.

[68] Yijing remarks that the cells or rooms (*fang* 房) in the "Western Region" (India) are narrow (*ze* 迮): Wang 2009a: 136 and Li 2000: 105.

[69] Karashima 2012/1: 102ff. *atha dāni stokā vihārakā bhavanti / dviṇṇāṃ trayāṇāṃ janānāṃ eko vihārako uddiśitavyo. / atha dāni evaṃ pi stokā bhavanti / caturṇṇāṃ pañcānāṃ vā janānāṃ eko vihā(...)rako*

The text goes on to say that in case of a shortage of cells, monks should live together in another building (*ekavastuka*).[70] If this is not available, they should stay in a shelter (*channa*), underneath a tree (*vṛkṣamūla*), on the meditation path (? *caṃkrama*), or in the open space (*abhyavakāśa*).[71] The *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* has a special term for 'cell community' (*pariveṇika*).[72] The information given in this section is particularly interesting in relation to the numbers of monks which, for instance, the Chinese travelogues give for particular monasteries in relation to the archaeological remains (see below).

The *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* also distinguishes between three qualities of *vihāra*s.

> There are indeed three [types of] monasteries, of best, of middle, of lower [quality]. As far as the best [type of] cell is concerned, [its] ground is of the color of black beans, the covering [of the walls][73] is meticulously white, the wall is well prepared[74]. This is the best [type of] cell. What then is the [type of] cell of middle [quality]? As for the [type of] cell of middle [quality], [its] ground is of the color of black beans, the wall is well prepared, [but] the covering is not meticulously white. Thus is the [type of] cell of middle [quality]. What then is the [type of] lower [quality]? As for the [type of] cell of lower [quality], [its] ground is of the color of black beans, [but] the covering is not meticulously white, and also the wall is not well prepared.[75]

What is also mentioned in the texts is that the monastic structures were indeed at least two-storied (**Figs 2 & 6**). All the other features mentioned by Xuanzang have not been verified *in situ*, but it cannot be excluded that some future excavation brings more to light. Three-storied buildings (*tṛbhūmika*) are mentioned, for instance, in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ*.[76]

The fact that monastic buildings had (at least) two stories and tower-like structures is supported by the canonical normative texts. The *Suttanipāta* commentary *Paramatthajotikā*, for

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uddiśitavyo. / atha dāni ekavastukaṃ bhavati / bhikṣū ca bahu bhavaṃti / vṛddhānāñ ca mañcā prajñāpayitavāḥ.

[70] The Chinese parallel has the rather unspecific term *datang* 大堂 ('great hall') and gives less alternatives for resting places.

[71] Karashima 2012/1: 104.

[72] Karashima 2012/1: 219f.

[73] Karashima 2012/1: 195 translates this as "*Deckenbespannung*" ('ceiling covering'), which is unlikely.

[74] Karashima 2012/1: 195 translates this as "*verputzt*" ('lime-washed').

[75] *vihārā nāma trīṇi, jyeṣṭhako madhyamako kanīyasako. jyeṣṭhako ... nāma vihārako, bhūmi bhavati {/} māṣakānavallā, ulloko bhavati {/} prapāṇḍarā, bhitti bhavati {/} kṛtakarmmā. evaṃ jye(...)ṣṭhako. {kin ti madhyamako} dāni madhyamako? madhyamako nāma vihārako, <bhūmi> bhavati {/} māṣakālavarṇṇā, bhitti bhavati kṛtakarmmā, / na ca bhavati {/} ullāpo prapāṇḍaro. evaṃ madhyamako. / kin ti dāni kanīyasako? bhūmi bhavati {/} māṣakālavarṇṇā, nâpi bhavati {/} ullāpo prapāṇḍaro, nā haîva bhitti kṛtaparikarmmā. evaṃ kanīyasako* (Karashima 2012/1: 195f).

[76] Karashima 2012/1: 164f.

instance, describes Migāramātā's multi-storied mansion (*pāsāda*),[77] a monastic complex in the Pubbārāma in Sāvatthi as follows.

> The lower level of Migāramātā's mansion[78] had five hundred chambers with peaked rooftops in which five hundred bhikkhus lived. When the Blessed One stayed in the lower level of the mansion, out of respect of the Blessed One the bhikkhus did not go to the upper level (*upari-pāsāda*).[79]

In relation to this passage, Bhikkhu Bodhi rightfully points out: "I translate literally, but I cannot visualize how rooms with a story above them could be described as having peaks (*kūṭāgāragabbha*)."[80] It is obvious that *kūṭāgāra(gabbha)* here does not necessarily mean '(chamber) with peaked rooftops', but it may be the Pāli correspondence to Chinese *taige* 臺閣 and related terms and would then refer to similar tower-like high and lofty structures as do their Chinese equivalents. Cone's dictionary gives as a second meaning of the word — "an upper room, a belvedere"[81] — which does not add much to the picture.

Other references to monastic buildings with two or more stories are found in different *Vinaya* texts. The fact that monks are advised to shut the monastery from inside when they leave and then climb over the walls with the help of a ladder (*kaḍevarikā*) or a rope (*rejju = rajju*) (the remains of which can, of course, not be expected *in situ*) does also indicate a considerable height of the buildings.[82] The Mahāsāṅghika–Lokottaravāda *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya* refers to a seven-storied (*sapta-bhūmaka*) monastery.[83] While we can indeed assume that some of the bigger monasteries were multi-storied, the archaeological evidence for ceilings is missing. Yijing reports that the ceilings or roofs of the Nālandā *Mahāvihāra* were made of bricks. A passage in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ*, however, suggests that there were different types of roofs (*chadana*).[84]

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[77] Karashima 2012/1: 17 translates *prāsāda* as "mehrstöckiges Gebäude" ('multi-storied building'). See also Gräfe 1974: 53f.

[78] Literally 'under the mansion (*pāsāda*) ...'

[79] Smith 1916: 336: *Migārāmātu pāsādassa ca heṭṭhā pañca kūṭāgāragabbhasatāni honti, yesu pañcasatā bhikkhū vasanti. Tattha, yadā Bhagavā heṭṭhāpāsāde vasati, tadā bhikkhū Bhagavato gāravena upari-pāsādaṃ nâruhanti.* (Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.) 2017: 813).

[80] Bhikkhu Bodhi 2017: 1455, n. 1188.

[81] Cone 2001: 723b, s.v. *kūṭa*.

[82] Karashima 2012/1: 119f.

[83] Roth 1970: 62: ... *pi bhikṣusaṃghasya dāpayitvā bhikṣuṇīsaṃgho sapta-bhūmakaṃ pi vihāraṃ pratīcchaty anāpattiḥ*. Nolot 1991: 46: *"... si la communauté des nonnes accepte, fût-ce même un vihara des* [sept (MD)] *étages, il n'y a pas faute."* This part is missing in the Chinese translation (Hirakawa 1982: 83ff).

[84] See also Gräfe 1974: 65.

It should not be overlooked [when] a residence (*vihāra*)[85] is leaking, has gaps, is dirty [and] is not well preserved. If it is covered by grass, bundles of grass should be added; [if] it is covered by unburnt [bricks],[86] unburnt bricks should be added; [if] it is covered by tiles, tiles should be added; [if] it is covered by lime, lumps of lime should be added; [if] it is covered by clay, lumps of clay should be added;[87] [if the ground] has become wet through rain, one should fill up the muddy [ground by dry soil], add pebbles (?)[88] [and] add cow dung.[89]

One may add wooden planks (*phalaka*)[90] and leaves (*parṇa*, Pāli *paṇṇa*)[91] to the list given in this text. The different types of material indicate different types of residential structures and probably also different developmental stages of *vihāra*s; grass and leaves clearly point to hut-like structures, while stone, bricks, tiles, lime, or clay were probably the material used for more solid buildings.

Taking into account all these details about the architectural structure and layout of monasteries, the 'flat' evidence (see Fig. 3) of excavated Buddhist monasteries in India and their fairly regular courtyards (Figs. 3 & 4) without much indication of specific functions of specific spaces does not offer much help in verifying many of these details.

CHINESE SOURCES ON INDIAN MONASTERIES

Interestingly, it is exactly the Jetavana monastery which is the topic in the most conspicuous Chinese source of the description of an Indian monastery from the Tang period: Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667) 'description' of the Jetavana monastery in Śrāvasti in his *Zhong-Tianzhu-Shewei-guo-*

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[85] Karashima 2012/1: 86, n.1 states that *vihāra* here should mean 'cell', but 'monastery' or 'monastic complex' makes sense as well, particularly since cells were not free-standing but part of monastic courtyards.

[86] Karashima adds 'tiles' ("*Ziegel*").

[87] The last two types obviously require a supportive structure which most naturally would have been wooden planks.

[88] This is Karashima's hypothetical translation. I would suggest that *vaṃghorikā* or the variant *baṃghorikā*, with a shift of the aspiration with Skt *bhaṅga* (*bhaṅgura* or the denominative *bhaṅguray*-), in the sense of 'shredded stone' or 'shredded bricks'. A more detailed description of the preparation of the ground is given in the same text (Karashima 2012/1: 107f).

[89] *na dāni vihāro adhyupekṣitavyo | oddīrṇṇako praluggako acaukṣo vā apratisaṃskṛto vā ‖ atha khalu yadi tāva tṛṇacchadano bhavati | tṛ(…)ṇapūlako dātavyo | apakkacchadano bhavati | apakkā dātavyā | kabhallacchadano bhavati, kabhallikā dātavyā | suddhā<cchadano bhavati sudhāpiṇḍo dātavyo> mṛttikācchadano bhavati mṛtpiṇḍo dātavyo | varṣāya ovṛṣṭo bhavati, vikhallikā opūre<ta>vyā, vaṃghorikā dātavyā, gomayaśāto dātavyo*: (Karashima 2012/1: 85f).

A similar but shorter passage is found elsewhere in the text (Karashima 2012/1: 96f).

[90] The Chinese parallel of the quoted text passage has *ban* 板 (Karashima 2012/1: 85), but the Skt term is also found in the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* (Karashima 2012/1: 199f). For an illustration of holes for ceiling beams, see **Fig. 2** where, however, the question arises — as it does elsewhere — to what extent the reconstruction by the Archaeological Survey of India represents the original archaeological evidence.

[91] The Pāli *Vinaya* lists five kinds of roofs: brick (*iṭṭhakā*), stone (*silā*), lime (*sudhā*), grass (*tiṇa*), and leaves (*paṇṇa*) (Karashima 2012/1: 87, n.3).

Fɪɢ. 3 Monastery 11, Nalanda.
Photo: M.B. Rajani

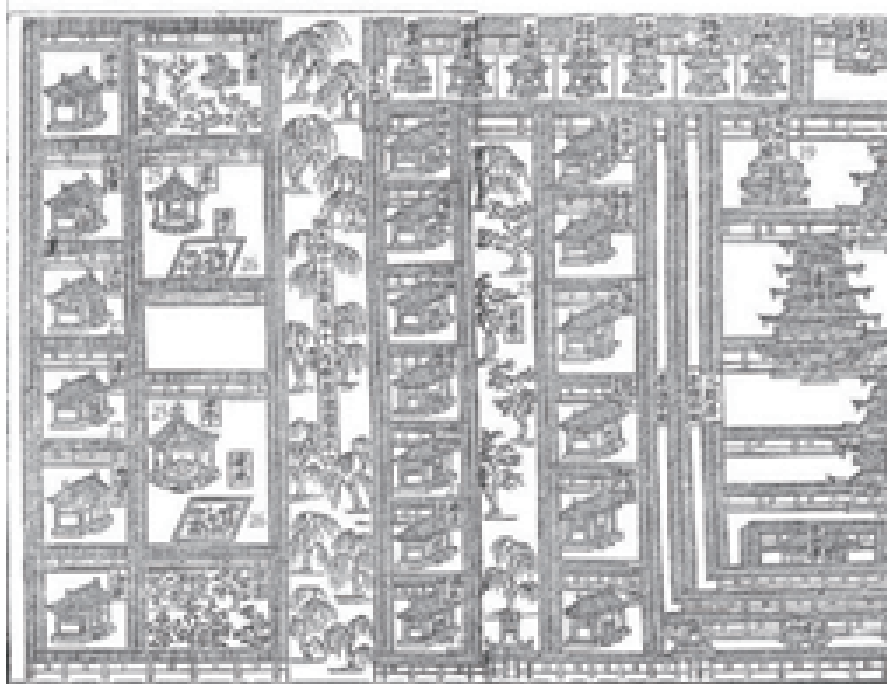Fɪɢ. 4 Monastery 10, Nalanda.
Photo: author

FIG. 5 Left part of the map of Jetavana *vihāra*
(depicting the 'infrastructural' facilities) according to Daoxuan.
Source: T.1892, after line 813a.15

FIG. 6 Excavation pitch, Telhara.
Photo: Laxshmi Greaves

Qihuan-si-tujing 中天竺舍衛國祇洹寺圖經 (*Illustrated Sūtra of the Jetavana Monastery in the Kingdom of Śrāvasti in Central India*).[92] When imagining an ideal monastery like the Jetavana *vihāra*, Daoxuan clearly comes from a different angle than the *Vinaya* passages presented and discussed so far. The text gives, as Ho Puay-Peng has put it, "the provision of a model of the ideal monastery for the Chinese Buddhist church"[93] — a model which never did fully materialize or exist in reality.[94]

The authority of the blueprint of a monastery laid out in the text is, similar to the Pāli source discussed earlier, that Daoxuan claims to present the most well-known monastery of the time of the Buddha. A look at Daoxuan's 'description' and the depiction made based on it immediately reveals the idealized Chinese character of this monastic complex. But it also shows a well-constructed correlation between architectural layout, doctrinal concepts, and discipline. After all, Daoxuan was one of the most influential *Vinaya* masters (*lüshi* 律師) in the history of Chinese Buddhism and had a profound knowledge of both the *Vinaya* (mainly of the Dharmaguptaka) and monastic practice and institutions.

Another work by Daoxuan, the *Guanzong-chuangli-jietan-tujing-bingxu* 關中創立戒壇圖經并序 (*Illustrated Scripture of the Erection of the Ordination Platform in the Guanzhong[-Era]*), contains a map of the Jetavana monastery which clearly shows again that what Daoxuan 'describes' in the *Illustrated Sūtra* was not an Indian but rather an idealized Chinese monastery[95] based on the layout of the imperial capital Chang'an 長安.[96]

Despite their idealized character and emphasis on religious structures, Daoxuan's 'description' and plan **(Fig. 5)** do reflect pretty much the architectural elements mentioned in the last part of the Jetavana narrative and other *Vinaya* texts, although the *Vinaya* preferred by him, the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, does not give these details in its brief story of the donation of the Jetavana monastery. They show and refer to bathrooms and halls (*yushi-yuan* 浴室院: *janthāgharasālā*),[97] seven-story structures (*qichong-ta* 七重塔: *sattabhūmikadvārakoṭṭhakapāsāda*, interpreted in the Chinese style as a pagoda in the centre of the monastery instead of a gate

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[92] T.1899. Forte 1988: 38ff. A detailed study of the text is Tan 2002, which may be supplemented by Ho 1995. For the Jetavana *vihāra* as an idealized *"Sehnsuchtsort"* ('place of longing'), identified with Angkor Wat in Cambodia, in early modern Japanese imagination, see Ishizawa 2015.

[93] Ho 1995: 2.

[94] Soper 1942: 37 thinks that the "(proto-)type" of monasteries described as the Jetavana monastery is to be found in the 6th-century Yongning-si 永寧寺 in Luoyang 洛陽.

[95] T.1892.812a.ff. This was already highlighted by Soper 1942: 36f: "The details of this account are elaborate and fantastic, surrounding what may have been a small kernel of information by a much greater proportion of hearsay and pure imagination. The layout given the monastery, strictly symmetrical and facing toward the south, is certainly Chinese rather than Indian."

[96] See Ho 1995 and Tan 2002.

[97] See the discussion in Heirman and Torck 2012: 37ff.

mansion), including the more realistic three-story structures (*sanceng* 三層, *sanchong-lou* 三重樓, *sanchong-ge* 三重閣) mentioned by the Chinese travellers, lotus ponds (*lianchi* 蓮池: *pokkharaṇī*), wells and respective buildings (*jingting* 井亭 : *udapānāsālā*), storages for fruits and food (*guozi-ku* 果子庫, *fanshi-ku* 飯食庫: *koṭṭhaka*), and kitchens (*jingchu* 淨廚: *kappiyakuṭī*).[98]

Daoxuan's Jetavana monastery is, on the other hand, very much void of the typical residential courtyards (*yuan* 院) with their cells (*fangshe* 房舍) which we find described in Xuanzang's and Yijing's records (see below) and at the actual archaeological sites. Daoxuan's 'description' implies that 'courtyards' were functionally separated from other parts of the greater monastery, which may explain why these other sections are so rarely found integrated into or in the direct vicinity of the residential monastic structures. In an Indian context, the layout of the monastic site at Thotlakonda in Andhra Pradesh, excavated by Krishna Sastry, Subrahmanyam, and Rao and studied by Fogelin,[99] seems to be closest to this type of monastery described by Daoxuan, with the courtyards being distinctly separated from other parts of the monastery.

Daoxuan was, for a while at least, a collaborator of Xuanzang, and one would expect that his projection of an Indian Buddhist monastery like Jetavana would have been influenced by the record of Xuanzang or of other Chinese traveller monks. As a matter of fact, Daoxuan did not find much information about monasteries in Faxian's and Xuanzang's records (see below). [100] According to his own remarks,[101] he had to rely on two sources by the Sui monk Lingyu 靈裕[102] which are no longer extant: the *Shengji-ji* 聖跡記 (*Record of Sacred Traces*) in two fascicles (*juan*), and the *Sigao* 寺誥 (*Instructions [On How to Build] a Monastery*).[103]

Indeed, if we turn to the Chinese travelogues in the hope to find a less normative–prescriptive and more 'practice-oriented' description of monasteries and their function(s), we can see that there

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[98] A similar 'description' is found in the Chinese Mahāsāṅghika–Lokottaravāda *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya* (T.1425.474c.27ff.): 我先已曾與僧作房舍、講堂、溫室、食堂、門屋、井屋、廁屋、洗脚處屋，曾共眾人作，未曾為尼作。 "I have already built a lodging house for the sake of the Order of bhikṣus, a lecture hall, a steam bath, a dining room, a gate house, a well house, a lavatory, and a room to wash the feet, ..." (Hirakawa (trans.) 1982: 84). It is slightly strange that no refectory (*bhaktāgra*) is mentioned, for which see Gräfe 1974: 62.

[99] Fogelin 2006: 81ff.

[100] Ho's 1995: 4 assumption that Faxian's record may have influenced Daoxuan rather than Xuanzang's is, of course, not substantiated by textual evidence.

[101] Ho 1995: 4.

[102] See the 11th/12th century *Vinaya* commentary *Sifen-lü-xingshi-chaozi-chiji* 四分律行事鈔資持記 (T.1805.363a.9). According to the brief entry about Lingyu in the Fei Zhangfeng's 費長房 6th-century *Lidai-sanbao-ji* 歷代三寶紀 (*Records of the Three Treasures Throughout the Successive Dynasties*) T.2034, he had authored / compiled nine works — strangely enough, the *Sigao* is not listed –, including one *Tasi-ji* 塔寺記 (*Record of Stūpas and Monasteries*) (T.2034.105a.19ff).

[103] Daoxuan refers to another work called *Zaosi-gao* 造寺誥 by the monk Shengde 盛德 (T.1804.134c.17).

is not much information available about the 'functional' structures of the monastery like refectory, kitchen, bath, etc. mentioned in the different *Vinaya* texts. In the oldest extant travelogue, Faxian's *Foguo-ji* 佛國記 (*Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms*),[104] one of the few exceptions is the mention of an obviously huge refectory in the Gomatī monastery (Qumodi 瞿摩帝) in Khotan (Yutian 于闐).

> Three thousand monks consume the *gaṇḍī*-meal (*jianchui-shi* 揵搥食) in this Mahāyāna monastery. When they enter the refectory (*shitang* 食堂), this happens in a dignified, orderly and respectful [way], and they take their seat one after the other.[105]

When looking for descriptions of Indian monasteries in the Chinese travelogues of the post-Gupta period, particularly those of Xuanzang and Yijing, the Nālandā *Mahāvihāra* comes to one's mind not only as the monastery in India where most of the Chinese Buddhist monks who travelled to India at that time stayed but also because it is one of the best explored and discussed Buddhist monastic site or monastery in India.[106] And it is indeed this monastery which is described by Xuanzang and Yijing in some detail — however, in details which are not necessarily compatible between the two records and also predominantly not verifiable by the archaeological situation *in situ*.

If we look at the source which ranks prominently among the Chinese Buddhist travelogues from which we may expect to get the most relevant information[107] — Xuanzang's *Datang-Xiyu-ji* 大唐西域記 (*Record of the Western Regions of the Great Tang*)[108] — it leaves us quite disappointed. There is not much information about Nālandā as a monastic institution in the section where Xuanzang concentrates mostly on the activity of donors but does not describe the monastery and its structure as such.[109] His description of the layout of the different monastic complexes or courtyards founded by different rulers is slightly puzzling, to say the least, and does not match any of the features or layout of the excavated site.[110] Generally, Xuanzang does not seem to be

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[104] T.2085.

[105] T.2085.857b.9f. 是大乘寺，三千僧共揵搥食。入食堂時，威儀齊肅，次第而坐，一切寂然，器鉢無聲。 Deeg (2005a: 511f); on the *gaṇḍī*-meal, see 90ff.

[106] I have dealt with some aspects of the sources about Nālandā and translated the relevant Chinese sources in Deeg 2018b. I use those translations here with slight modifications. For a general overview on Nālandā and its history, see Asher 2015 and Stewart 2018.

[107] T.2087.923b.13ff, translated in Deeg 2018b: 116f, Appendix 1.

[108] Hereafter *Record*. Translations are my own. For a more recent alternative translation, see Li 1996. Text and punctuation follow Ji 1985.

[109] Compare the map made based on Xuanzang's data and the geospatial map of the archaeological area **(Figs. 9 & 10)**.
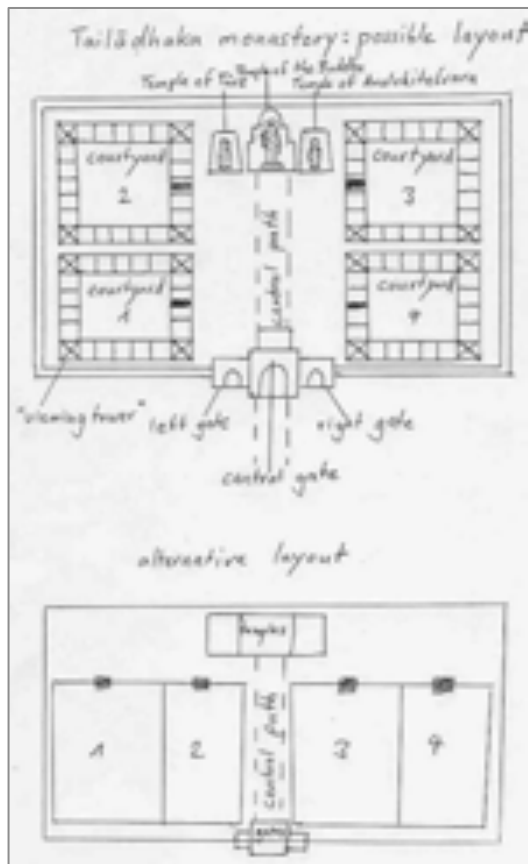
[110] See Rajani 2016: 8, Fig. 4.

Fig. 7
Sketches of the reconstructed layout of
Tailāḍhaka monastery.
Source: author

Fig. 8
Map of the "Mahābodhi *saṅghārāma*."
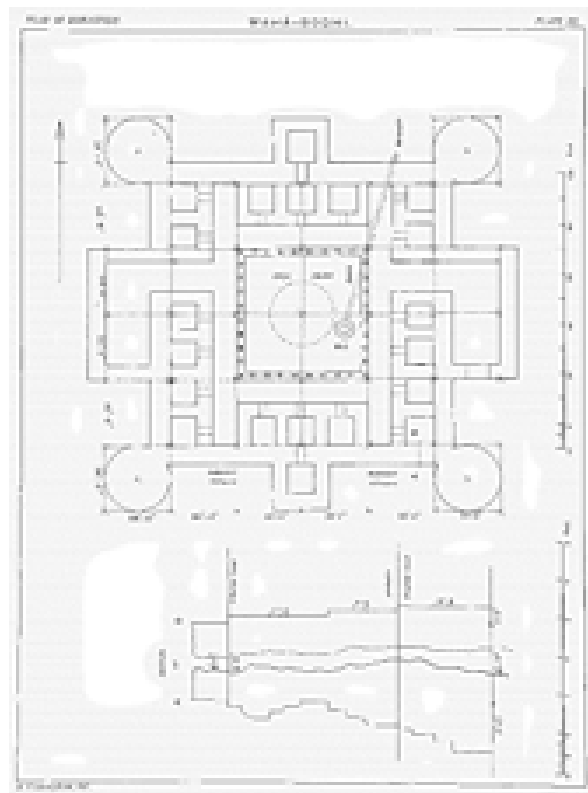Source: A. Cunningham 1892: Plate XX

FIG. 9 Reconstructed map of Nālandā *Mahāvihāra* according to Xuanzang.
Courtesy of M.B. Rajani

very interested in the details of monastic life if it did not concern aspects of studying, learning or the cultic centres, shrines with statues of Buddhas or *bodhisattva*s or *stūpa*s with enshrined relics.

However, Xuanzang offers a slightly more detailed description of two monasteries which are located relatively close to Nālandā. One of these is the Tailāḍhaka monastery (Tiluozejia 醍羅擇迦 / *$t^h\varepsilon j$'-la-drε:jk-kɨa), the modern site of Telhara about 45km south of Patna, Bihar (Fig. 6).[111] According to Xuanzang's biography, he spent two months there to study under the master Prajñābhadra / Banrebatuoluo 般若跋陀羅 / *pan-nia'-bat-da-la.[112] This stay also certainly triggered a more detailed report on the monastery than in other cases.

> Going more than 100 miles from the ancient monastery in a southwesterly [direction, one] arrives at the Tiluozejia monastery. The residential buildings (*tingyu* 庭宇) consist of four courtyards (*yuan* 院), the viewing towers (*guan'ge* 觀閣) have three stories, the high platforms (*chongtai* 崇臺) are piled up high,[113] and the [multi-]storied gate (*chongmen* 重門) is wide open; [it] has been built by the last heir of King Bimbisāra. [The monastery] summons talented men and invites those of great virtue from afar. Scholars from foreign countries and noble talents from far regions, [all] of the same kind, rush together and come [here], each one following the other according to their seniority. There are several thousand monks [who] all study the Mahāyāna. On the pathway of the central gate are three temples with signs of the wheel on top and bells hanging in the air; on the bottom, levelled foundations have been built, encircled by railings; the doors and windows, the ridgepoles, the outer wall, and the stairways are prominently erected [and adorned] with gold and copper, with generous free space between [them]. In the central temple is a standing Buddha statue, three *zhang* high,[114] in the left [one] is a statue of the bodhisattva Tārā, [and] in the right [one] is a statue of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. All these three statues are casted from brass; [they look] powerful and awe-inspiring, [serving] as a reminder from the distant [past]. In each temple is one *sheng*[115] of relics [from

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[111] Unfortunately, no excavation record of the activities and findings at the site has been published to date. For a preliminary overview of the findings, see Choudhary 2016. At the moment, Dr Bijoy Chaudhary, my co-investigator on the 'Xuanzang Trail' project funded by the Bihar Heritage Development Society, is excavating at the site with permission of the Archaeological Survey of India.

[112] *Datang-Daciensi-sanzang-fashi-zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (*Biography of the Tripiṭaka Dharma-master from the Great Cien-Monastery of the Great Tang*). Huili 慧立 (revised and expanded by Yancong 彥悰). T.2053.244a.2ff (hereafter *Biography*); Li 1995: 126.

[113] It is difficult to imagine what is meant in concrete terms by the expression *leiren* 累仞 but the only other occurrence in the Chinese canon is in Daoxuan's *Guang-hongming-ji* 廣弘明集 (*Expanded on the Propagation and Clarification [of Buddhism]*) (T.2130.329b.29) for a mountain peak (*feng* 峯), so implying a more general meaning in the translated sense.

[114] *zhang* 丈: one *zhang* is 10 *chi* 尺 (1 *chi* is approximately 25cm); thus, the height of the statue would have been around 7.5m.

[115] 1 *sheng* 升 is approximately 600ml.

which] a divine light shines sometimes, and strange ominous [signs] occur every once a while.[116]

So far, excavations have not verified the possible layout(s) of the monastery which can be reconstructed from the data and the details given in Xuanzang's report (see **Fig. 7**).[117] There are some architectural features which need philological scrutinizing and archaeological contextualization. The excavated parts of the Telhara site are too small for four monastic courtyards and a population of several thousand monks **(Fig. 6)**. The text talks about three-story 'viewing towers' (*guan'ge* 觀閣)[118] as part of the monastic residential courtyards. These are obviously what Xuanzang and other authors or translators call *taiga*,[119] etc., and they refer to multi-storied, tower-like structures. The height of the '[multi-]story gates' (*chongmen* 重門) is not given (for comparison, the *toraṇa*s at Sanci 1 are more than 11m high)[120] and have not been found but are described in other texts. Yijing's description of Nālandā (see below) implies that the gates were not very large.

Another similarly detailed description of a monastic complex in Xuanzang's *Record* is that of the Sri Lankan monastery at Bodhgayā founded by the Siṅghalese King Śrī Meghavarman (Pāli Siri Meghavaṇṇa).

> Outside of the northern gate of the *bodhi* tree [complex] is the Mahābodhi saṅghārāma,[121] previously built by the king of the kingdom of Siṃhala. There are six courtyards [with] residential rooms, three-story viewing towers, [and] the encompassing walls are three or four *zhang* high, of exquisite workmanship and lavishly adorned by painting (*danqing* 丹青).[122] Buddha statues are cast from gold and silver, and their embellishment [is made] of precious items. The

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[116] T.2087.913b21ff. 故伽藍西南行百餘里，至鞮羅擇迦伽藍。庭宇四院，觀閣三層，崇臺累仞，重門洞啟，頻毘娑羅王末孫之所建也。旌召高才，廣延俊德。異域學人，遠方髦彥，同類相趨，屓隨戾止。僧徒千數，並學大乘。中門當塗有三精舍，上置輪相，鈴鐸虛懸；下建層基，軒檻周列。戶牖棟梁，墻垣階陛，金銅隱起，廁間莊嚴。中精舍佛立像高三丈，左多羅菩薩像，右觀自在菩薩像。凡斯三像，鍮石鑄成，威神肅然，冥鑒遠矣。精舍中各有舍利一升，靈光或照，奇瑞間起。

[117] I apologize to the reader for my crude sketches and my inability to produce digitally enhanced images.

[118] *guan'ge* 觀閣 is a very rare term in the whole canon. In the Taishō edition, it only occurs seven times (Daoxuan's repetition of the *Record* passages in the *Shijia-fangzhi* 釋迦方志 (*A Record of Buddhist Places*) T.2088 can be excluded) and twice in the *Record* (here and in the description of the Mahābodhi saṅghārāma (see below)). One metaphorical usage of the term in Zhengguan's 澄觀 *Avataṃsakasūtra* commentary *Dafangguang-fo-huayan-jing-shu* 大方廣佛華嚴經疏 is striking since it seems to equate the term *chongge* 重閣 ('multi-story tower') (T.1735.912a.10) with *guan'ge* (912a.15).

[119] It seems that Xuanzang here splits the binome (bisyllabic term) into two, *ge* 閣 being the basic term and *tai* 臺 here used as an attributive.

[120] Kleiner 2020: 450.

[121] *Moheputi*[-*sengjialan*] 摩訶菩提[僧伽藍] / **ma-xa-bɔ-dεj-*°.

[122] The term, literally 'cinnabar-red and green', has several meanings (Hanyu-dacidian, s.v.), but here seems to refer to colourful painting on the walls.

*stūpa*s are large and are delicately adorned; inside there are relics of the Buddha, bone relics of the size of a finger joint.[123]

The presence of this monastery is supported by Chinese records after Xuanzang (Wang Xuance, Yijing, and others),[124] by the two so-called Mahānāman inscriptions found at Bodhgayā, by an (anachronistic?)[125] reference in the Śrī Laṅkan chronicle *Mahāvaṃsa* (29.41) and, relatively late, by the Tibetan monk Dharmasvāmin / Chag lo-tsa-ba chos-rje-dpal (13th century).

According to the position given by Xuanzang, the Siṃhalese monastery in Bodhgayā should be north of the Mahābodhi temple, very probably beneath the elevated area where the access path to the temple and other buildings are at present. Cunningham identified this huge site as the Siṃhalese monastery.[126] Unfortunately, after his exploration, the site was never properly excavated. What can be concluded from Cunningham's report and the only other report (by Bloch)[127] is that the building complex covered a considerable space. According to Cunningham, the whole complex measured 1500 to 2000 feet from west to east and 1000 feet from north to south (see **Fig. 8**). It had four massive towers at its four corners and three smaller towers on each side between the two towers at the corners. Despite the considerable size of the site and Cunningham's not very convincing attempts to even identify the cell of the Buddha statue and the chamber for the relics mentioned by Xuanzang, the layout does not correspond to Xuanzang's description nor would the structure have been able to house the number of monks mentioned by Xuanzang.

An interesting point in the 'description' of the Siṃhalese monastery is that Xuanzang's report about the Mahābodhi saṅghārāma may refer to colourfully painted walls (*danqing*) at the surface of monastic structures.[128]

Returning to Nālandā... Surprisingly enough, there is much more information about the monastery in the *Biography* of Xuanzang than in his own *Record*.

> Monastic residences are arranged separately, [and] they are divided into eight courtyards. Platforms with precious items are arrayed like the stars, magnificent buildings tower [like] lofty peaks, temples [stand] respectful in the mist, the

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[123] T.2087.918b.6ff. 菩提樹北門外摩訶菩提僧伽藍，其先僧伽羅國王之所建也。庭宇六院，觀閣三層，周堵垣牆高三四丈，極工人之妙，窮丹青之飾。至於佛像，鑄以金銀，凡厥莊嚴，廁以珍寶。諸窣堵波高廣妙飾，中有如來舍利，其骨舍利大如手指節。

[124] For a full discussion of these sources, I refer to my forthcoming translation of and commentary on Xuanzang's *Record*.

[125] The text records a visit from the monastery on the occasion of the consecration ceremony of the Great Stūpa (*Mahāthūpa*) at the time of King Dutthagāmanī (2nd century BCE).

[126] Cunningham 1892: 42ff.

[127] Bloch 1912: 155.

[128] On colourful patterns painted on the walls, see Gräfe 1974: 66, and, for a later period (11th century?), in the *Kriyāsaṃgraha-nāma-pañjikā*: see Skorupski 1998: 193f. Normally, cells were whitewashed (*śvetavarṇa*) (Karashima 2012/1: 115f).

halls [are erected as if they are] flying on rosy clouds, clouds and wind arise in [their] windows and doors, [and] sun and moon alternately [shine] at the eaves of the cells; further, there are clear water channels meandering, blue lotuses, water lilies and *kanaka* flower trees[129] with flashing [colours] inside, [and] mango groves are scattered outside. All the monk cells in a courtyard [have] four-storied pavilions with ridge beams [shaped like] horned dragons and roof beams [painted in the colours] of the rainbow, finely chiselled capitals and vermillion red pillars, carved [lines of] columns and engraved railings, foundations [shining like] jade and patterned tips on the rafters, the ridge beams of the roofs are arrayed with shining precious stones, the rafters [of the roofs] are aligned with strings of color. There are 10 million of monasteries in India, [but] this one is the ultimate in terms of majesty and loftiness. There are always 10 thousand monks, residential and visiting, [who] all study the Mahāyāna but also the eighteen *nikāya*s, and then [they] also study all kinds of secular texts like the scriptures of the Veda, [works on] logic, grammar, medicine, fortune telling.[130]

In his biography of Xuanzang, Daoxuan normally follows the *Record*, but his 'description' of Nālandā seems to be informed by different sources.

... the monastery of Nālandā, [which] in the language of the Tang [means] "Not-Enough-Giving." It is the greatest of the monasteries in Jambudvīpa, and no one is more eminent than it. All together five kings have built [it and] have made offerings with increasing generosity; from this it has received its name. This monastery has five monastic [courtyards which use] the same big gate, the whole door being four stories [high] and having a [total] height of about eight *zhang*.[131] The whole [monastery] is built of brick, [and] its highest walls are six *chi* thick. The outer [ring] wall[132] is three stories [high], the walls are also built of brick, with a height of about five *zhang*. There are water [bodies] meandering about inside and extremely deep lakes and trenches. [The monastery] is beautifully and impressively equipped with [motifs of] flowers and animals.[133]

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[129] *jieni-hua-shu* 羯尼花樹: *jieni* is an abbreviation of *jienijia* 羯尼迦 (Skt *kanaka*) which is used for a variety of plants (Petersburger Wörterbuch, s.v.), but very probably refers to the *Michelia / Magnolia champaca,* a large tree with very prominent yellow flowers.

[130] T.2053.237b.18ff. 庭序別開，中分八院。寶臺星列，瓊樓岳峙，觀竦烟中，殿飛霞上，生風雲於戶牖，交日月於軒簷，加以淥水透迤，青蓮菡萏，羯尼花樹暉煥其間，菴沒羅林森疎其外。諸院僧室皆四重重閣，虯棟虹梁，繡櫨朱柱，彫榱鏤檻，玉礎文楹，黌接瑤暉，槺連繩彩。印度伽藍數乃千萬，壯麗崇高，此為其極。僧徒主客常有萬人，並學大乘兼十八部，爰至俗典《吠陀》等書，因明、聲明、醫方、術數亦俱研習。

[131] I am not sure if this is the right translation, but I take the phrase *zhoulü sichong* 周閭四重 as specifying the one great gate (*yi damen* 一大門). Eight *zhang* (1 *zhang* = approximately 3m or less) would make the gate more than 20m high.

[132] This kind of wall is probably similar to the separating wall (*kanthā antarikā / antaritā*) between a Buddhist nunnery and a dwelling place of another mendicant group as described in the Mahāsāṅghika–Lokottaravāda *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya*: Roth 1970: 139, 306 and Nolot 1991: 88, 346.

[133] *Xu-gao-seng-chuan* 續高僧傳 (*Further Biographies of Eminent Monks*). T.2060.451c.2ff. ... 那爛陀寺，唐言施無厭也。贍部洲中寺之最者，勿高此矣。五王共造，供給倍隆，故因名焉。其寺都有五院，同

The most comprehensive description of the monastery is found in Yijing's *Datang-qiufa-gaoseng-zhuan* 大唐求法高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks Searching for the Dharma of the Great Tang*).

> Going about seven stations[134] from the 'Great Enlightenment Monastery' in a northeasterly [direction, one] arrives at the Nālandā monastery; this was originally built by the former King Śrī Śakrāditya for the north Indian monk Heluoshepanshe.[135] This monastery's first foundation just [consisted of] some square walls, [but] later generations of kings [and their] successors continuously built it into an imposing [monastery] so that in Jambudvīpa there is nowadays none which exceeds its [grandeur]. One cannot fully relate [its] layout but [I will] just briefly describe the area [it] encloses. So, the shape of this monastery is neatly square as [the plan] of a city with straight eaves on [all] four sides [forming] covered corridors all around; all [the buildings] are brick cells, three stories high, a story more than one *zhang* high, the crossbeams covered by wooden boards; originally, there were no rafters or tiles [but only] bricks used to cover the surface. All the monastic courtyards are [outlined] straight [so that one can] move around at ease. The walls behinds the cells form the outer side [of a courtyard]. The piled-up bricks are three or four *zhang* high. On top, [one] has made human heads in natural size of human [heads]. As for the cells for the monks, there are nine on each side. Each cell [measures] one square *zhang*. At the back, windows[136] open towards the eaves [of the outer wall]. Since the entries are higher [than wide, they] are only equipped with one door [wing].[137] The [entries] all face each other, and no curtains are allowed.[138] [If one] goes outside and simply looks around, [one can] see all four sides. If [one] instead watches each other, how then can [even] a little privacy be kept? In one corner, a planked way[139] is made to come and go [to the upper floors]. On top of each

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一大門，周闍四重，高八丈許。並用甎壘，其最上壁猶厚六尺。外郭三重，牆亦甎壘，高五丈許。中間水遶，極深池塹。備有花畜嚴麗可觀。

[134] *yi* 驛: explained by Yijing as corresponding to one *yojana* (= 12–15km).

[135] 曷羅社槃社 / EMC *γat-la-dzia'-ban-dzia'*. Several identifications have been proposed for this name. Chavannes' 1894: 84 reconstruction of 'Rājavaṃśa' (see also Mizutani 1999/3: 163, n.2) and Adachi's *granthavatsa* as a reference to a Jain monk (*nirgrantha – nir-*) are certainly wrong (Wang 2009b: 119, n.2).

[136] On the different types of windows (*vātapāṇa*), see Gräfe 1974: 64f; von Hinüber 1992: 12f.; Karashima 2012/1: 207, n.1.

[137] The *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* confirms that the cells had doors (*dvāra*) (Karashima 2012/1: 81); see also the description in Gräfe 1974: 64.

[138] This is in contradiction with most *Vinayas*, according to which curtains (Skt *cakkalī*) for windows and doors are allowed (Karashima 2012/1: 190ff).

[139] This seems to be the meaning of the term *gedao* 閣道 as explained in *Yiqiejing-yinyi* 一切經音義 (*Pronunciation and Meaning in the Complete Buddhist Canon*). T.2128.839a.24: 木於危險處為路名閣道也。 ("Wooden [plank used] as a pathway in dangerous and steep places is called *gedao*."). Chavannes 1894: 86 translates it as *chemin suspendu* which makes no sense in this context. In the light of the earlier discussion of the term *ge* 閣, this means the stairs to access the higher towers positioned at the corners of the monastic courtyard.

of the four corners of a monastic courtyard are brick halls which are inhabited by famous *bhadanta*s.[140] The gates of the monastic courtyards face to the west, with lofty pavilions rising into the air, carved in delicate shapes with very fine ornaments. These gates are connected with the cells [of the courtyards] and are originally not built separately, but two paces outside of [them] are four pillars neatly arranged. Although these gates are not excessively big, [their] framework is very solid. When the time for the meal has come, the heavy [door] bolts are closed again,[141] as it is the teaching of the Saint [i.e., the Buddha], the meaning of it being to prevent privacy. The ground inside of the monastic courtyards of about 30 square paces is all laid out with bricks.[142] For small [spaces] of only seven or five paces [as] is normally the space on top of the roofs, in front of the eaves [and] inside of the cells fragments of bricks as big as peaches or jujubes are used, [in the gaps of which] a mixture of sticky stuff and mud is rubbed to make a smooth [surface]; limestone is used, mixed with [material] such as hemp fibre, oil, hemp dreg, rotten skin, and soaked [together] for several days; [the mixture] is spread as a plaster on the brick; [all of this then] is covered by green grass, and after three days or so, it is checked [to see] if it is about to dry, [then] repeatedly wiped with a slippery stone, whisked with a liquid of stone or cinnabar, then with an oily coating [so that it] is bright and transparent like a mirror. The flights of stairs of its halls are all [treated] like this. After this is done once, it will never crack even if people trample on it for 10 or 20 years.[143] A different limestone will become soaked by water and then break. Of this kind, there are eight monastic courtyards, all [constructed] in the same way [as described] above and of a similar scheme. On the eastern side of the monastic courtyards, one or three cells are selected for setting up venerated statues; or in some cases, a separate platform is erected a little bit outside of this [eastern] side and made into a Buddha hall.[144] To the southwest of this monastery, outside of a large courtyard, great *stūpa*s (formerly called *ta* [which] is erroneous and abbreviated) and *caitya*s (formerly erroneously called *zhiti*) are just standing in a line, more than a 100 in number. So [many] sacred traces are next to each other that [one] cannot record them. [Embellishments of] gold and jade-like gems truly make [these] unusual. The etiquette of the disciplinary path and manners

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[140] 'teachers'.

[141] Chavannes 1894: 86 translates the exact opposite here: "*on enlève les barres de fermeture à toutes les portes.*" What is meant is obviously that the main gates of the monastic courtyards were closed during mealtimes when monks had to assemble in the refectory and were not supposed to be in their cells but gather to have their meal. See *Pravajyāvastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1444.1035c.11f), and also the *Abhisāmācārikādharmāḥ* on common meals of the *saṅgha* in the refectory (*bhaktāgra*): Karashima 2012/1: 21ff. On keys and locks in Buddhist monasteries, see von Hinüber 1992: 14ff.

[142] Is this the same as the *ākāśatalaka* in the *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya* of the Mahāsāṅghika–Lokottaravādin? See Roth 1970: 313, and translated as "*la terrasse (du vihāra)*" by Nolot 1991: 253.

[143] This method of making the surface of the floor is quite different from what is normally described in *Vinaya* texts (see above).

[144] The monastic courtyards at Nālandāa clearly shows this structure. I am wondering if this is what the *Abhisamācārikādharmāḥ* calls *vihārasya paścādvastuka*; Karashima 2012/2: 240f: "*hinterer Teil des Klosters*".

[of speech or gesture][145] of the monks in this [monastery] is as reported in the "Records of the Middle Region" and in the "Report Sent Back"[146]. ... [When I] formerly was in the capital [I] saw a man drawing the model of Jetavanavihāra, [but it] was based completely on empty fantasy. [147] According to [my] comprehensive and different information, [I] briefly outline it as it is. ... Although [I] have explained the arrangement of the monastery, [I] fear that it is, in the end, still misleading, and therefore [I] have painted this map and hope that this will [let it] appear before [one's] eyes without deviation. If this allows the erection of it according to this plan, [then this] will be indeed Rājagṛha [in] China [and] then it will be arranged withno variation. Therefore [I] exclaim: The beauty of the *saṅgha* is still expanding, the assembly of heroes was in the past and is in the present as well. [If one then] also knows the difference between life and death, then there will be not suffering! Model of the monastery.[148] This is the model of Srī Nālandā Mahāvihāra, [in the language of] the Tang translated as "Ominous Great Residence of the Divine Nāga." ... *Vihāra* means residence [which] is in comparison [to its Chinese equivalent] called 'temple' (*si*) [in Chinese, but] this is not translated correctly. If [one] has looked at one monastery, the other seven look the same. [They] are straight at the back [so that] people passing through [can] come and go.[149] Normally, [if one] looks at a monastery's scheme, [one] should face west to look at it, [and if one] is about to leave its gate on the west side, [one] can perceive its straight layout. [At a distance of] about 20 paces from the gate, on the southern side, there is a *stūpa*, about 100 *chi* high, [which marks] the place where the World-Honoured One formerly spent the summer retreat of three months. In Sanskrit, it is called *Muluojiantuojuzhi* [which] means "Original Fragrance Hall"[150] [in the language] of the Tang. ... The *saṅgha* in the monastery [consists] of 3500 [monks]; there 201 villages belonging to the monastery which were given, with their population, by successive generations of rulers as eternal offerings [to the monastery].[151]

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[145] *chu'na* 出納 is a technical translation for the Skt *vyavahāra* and in this context clearly has the translated meaning. See Edgerton 1953: 516a, s.v.

[146] The *Jigui-zhuan* 寄歸傳 is Yijing's *Nanhai-jigui-neifa-zhuan* while the *Zhongfang-lu* 中方錄 is not known from any other source. Since this passage is particularly dealing with monastic regulation and discipline, I am tempted to interpret this as an otherwise unknown name used by Yijing for the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*: "the records [of the discipline] in the Middle Region (*zhongfang* = *madhyadeśa*)" as practiced in an ideal way at Nālandā.

[147] This probably refers to a model or plan of Jetavana made based on Daoxuan's work (see above) which was undoubtedly circulating in China during this period.

[148] Unfortunately, this map is not preserved in any version or edition of the text or elsewhere.

[149] I am not sure what the sentence *beishang pingzhi, tongren huan-wang* 背上平直，通人還往。 means exactly. Chavannes 1894: 94 translates it thus: "*En haut ils (les temples) offrent une terrasse plane où les passants peuvent aller et venir.*"

[150] 慕擺健陀俱胝 / EMC *mə-la-gianʰ-da-kuə-tri, Skt *Mūlagandhakūṭī*, Chin *Genben-xiang-dian* 根本香殿. On the *Mūlagandhakūṭī*, see Strong 1977.

[151] T.2066.5b.17ff. 大覺寺東北行七驛許，至那爛陀寺，乃是古王室利鑠羯羅昳底為北天苾芻曷羅社槃社所造。此寺初基纔餘方堵，其後代國王苗裔相承，造製宏壯，則瞻部洲中當今無以加也。軌模不可具述，但且略敘區寰耳。然其寺形，叟方如城，四面直簷，長廊遍匝，皆是塼室，重疊三層，層高丈餘，橫梁板

In Yijing's *Record of the Inner Law*, where we would expect more information of the architectural structure of monasteries represented by 'the mother of monasteries' Nālandā, the information is very brief (see Table 1 below).

What becomes clear from the different records about Nālandā is:

1. that the size (number of courtyards, number of residential monks) shows differences which cannot be explained away by a decrease or increase over time, and

2. that none of the textual data can be matched with the archaeological evidence reached at by excavations so far.

In relation to the first point, Table 1 offers a quick overview.[152]

According to the layouts of the monastic complexes (courtyards: *yuan* 院, *si* 寺) excavated so far, there are about 300 cells, a number which may be doubled by assuming each comprised two stories. This does not correspond exactly to the numbers of courtyards and cells in the textual sources.[153] The structures would not be able to house the number of monks given in the sources. Usually, the way to solve this discrepancy between the textual sources and the archaeological scenario is to either dismiss the data of the former as exaggeration — this is done quite often — or to assume that the excavated remains do not provide the full picture. Although both views can claim some weight, I do not think that these two extremes are very helpful in reconstructing a historical situation. Surely the numbers of monks given in the travelogue do not represent the

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闐，本無椽瓦，用塼平覆。寺皆正直隨意旋往。其房後壁即為外面也。疊塼峻峭，高三四丈。上作人頭，高共人等。其僧房也，面有九焉。一一房中可方丈許，後面通窓戶向簷矣。其門既高，唯安一扇，皆相瞻望，不許安簾。出外平觀，四面皆覩，互相檢察，寧容片私？於一角頭作閣道還往。寺上四角，各為塼堂，多聞大德而住於此。寺門西向，飛閣凌虛，雕刻奇形，妙盡工飾。其門乃與房相連，元不別作，但前出兩步，齊安四柱。其門雖非過大，實乃裝架彌堅。每至食時，重關返閉，既是聖教，意在防私。寺內之地方三十步許，皆以塼砌。小者或七步，或五步耳。凡所覆屋脊上簷前房內之地，並用塼羃如桃棗大，和雜粘泥，以杵平築，用疆石灰，雜以麻筋幷油及麻滓爛皮之屬，浸漬多日，泥於塼地之上，覆以青草，經三數日，看其欲乾，重以滑石揩拭，拂赤土汁或丹朱之類，後以油塗，鮮澄若鏡。其堂殿階陛，悉皆如此。一作已後，縱人踐蹋，動經一二十載，曾不圮坼。不同石灰，水沾便脫。如斯等類，乃有八寺，上皆平通，規矩相似。於寺東面[151]取房或一或三，用安尊像，或可即於此面前出多少，別起臺觀，為佛殿矣。此寺西南大院之外，方列大窣覩波(舊云塔者訛略)及諸制底(舊云支提者訛)數乃盈百。聖跡相連，不可稱記。金寶瑩飾，實成希有。其間僧徒綱軌出納之儀，具如《中方錄》及《寄歸傳》所述。 … 曾憶在京見人畫出祇洹寺樣，咸是憑虛。為廣異聞，略陳梗概云爾。 … 雖復言陳寺樣，終恐在事還迷，為此畫出其圖，冀今目擊無滯。如能奏請依樣造之，即王舍支那，理成無別耳。乃歎曰：眾美仍羅列，群英已古今。也知生死分，那得不傷心！寺樣。此是室利那爛陀莫訶毘訶羅樣，唐譯云吉祥神龍大住處也。 … 毘訶羅是住處義，比云寺者，不是正翻。如觀一寺，餘七同然。背上平直，通人還往。凡觀寺樣者，須面西看之，欲使西出其門，方得直勢。於門南畔可二十步，有窣堵波，高百尺許，是世尊昔日夏三月安居處。梵名慕攞健陀俱胝，唐云根本香殿矣。 … 此寺內僧眾有三千五百人，屬寺村莊二百一所，並是積代君王給其人戶，永充供養(言驛者即當一踰繕那也)。 The text is following the punctuation and emendations in Wang 2009:112ff.

[152] Translations of the complete text passages can be found in the appendices of Deeg 2018b.

[153] For comparison, the biggest monastic courtyard in South Asia known so far is Somapura (Bangladesh) with 177 cells.

results of a well-organized census! And hopefully we will see more excavations happening in the wider area of Nālandā.

TABLE 1
TEXTUAL SOURCES DETAILING NĀLANDĀ

Textual source	**Number of courtyards**	**Number of monks**
Xuanzang's *Record* (*Datang-Xiyu-ji*) 大唐西域記 T.2087.923c.19	—	several thousand (*shuqian* 數千)
Biography of Xuanzang (*Datang-Daciensi-sanzang-fashi-zhuan*) 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 T.2053.237b.18; 24f.	8	10,000 (residential and visiting)[154]
Daoxuan's biography of Xuanzang (*Xu-gaoseng-zhuan*) 續高僧傳 T.2060.451c.4; 9f.	5	4000 residential (+ several 10,000 visiting monks and laypeople)
Daoxuan's *Shijia-fangzhi* 釋迦方志 T.2088.964c.1f.	(10?)[155]	several 1000 (*shuqian* 數千)
Yijing's *Qiufa-gaoseng-zhuan* 大唐求法高僧傳 T.2066.5c.15 & 6b.20	8 (*ba si* 八寺)[156]	3500
Yijing's *Record of the Inner Law* (*Nanhai-jigui-neifa-zhuan*) 南海寄歸內法傳 T.2125.214a.4; 227a.25f.	8[157]	more than 3000
Song-gaoseng-zhuang 宋高僧傳: biography of Muniśrī / Monishili 牟尼室利 (?–806) T.2061.721a.9	9[158]	more than 10,000
Biography of Jiye 繼業 (2nd half of 10th century) T.2089.982a.28f.	several 10 (*shushi si* 數十寺)	—

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[154] The number of learned monks who had mastered a certain amount of Buddhist texts and were in a more privileged position than others is given as 1511.

[155] If the number of 'inspectors' (*zhishi* 知事) is an indication of the individual courtyards.

[156] With 8 cells per side = 32 cells/floor, 256 cells/courtyard or 512 cells in the case of two stories.

[157] About 300 rooms (*fang you sanbai* 房有三百).

[158] Indicates a circumference of 48 *li* (between 22–24 km).

Fig. 10
Geospatial map of Nalanda,
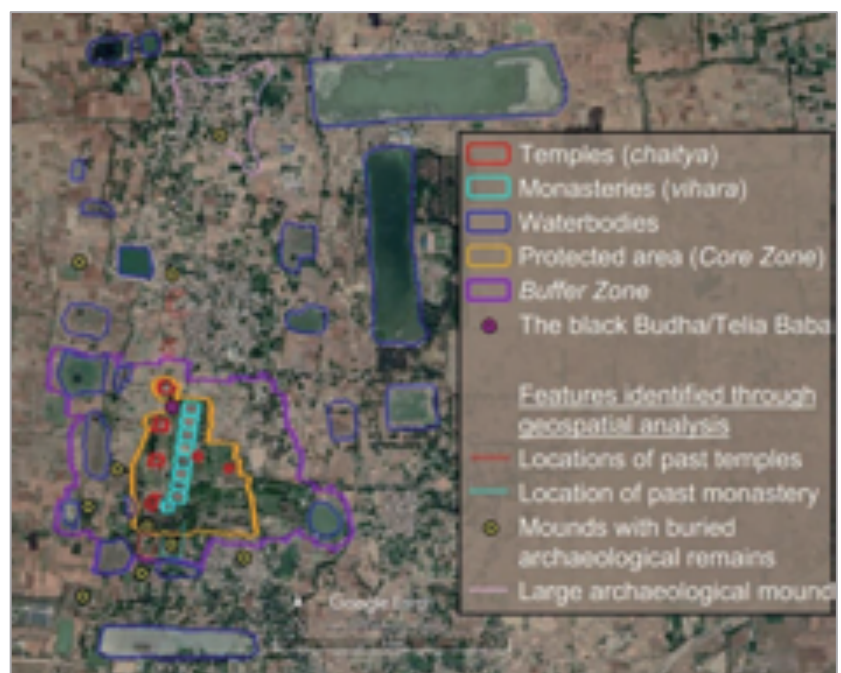protected area (in yellow).
Courtesy of M.B. Rajani

Fig. 11 Geospatial map of Nalanda, wider area.
Courtesy of M.B. Rajani

But we should also remember a few relevant points here, such as the regulations about the distribution and sharing of cells in the instructions about dwelling places for monks, apart from these solid structures (see above). Also, there are the remarks in the Chinese texts about the hierarchical distribution of rooms in monasteries. [159] If we bring together these pieces of information with the fact that the territory of the *Mahāvihāra* was much bigger than the modern archaeological area (as suggested through indications like surrounding water bodies[160] mentioned by Yijing[161] and through the yet unexcavated sites and mounds in the wider area,[162] it is quite possible that the majority of the monks at Nālandā was housed in much simpler structures (huts made of mud or wood) or shelters (tents) than in cells of brick-built structures which were reserved for the more eminent member of the *saṅgha*.

CONCLUSION

This discussion can only highlight some of the problems of doing research on Buddhist monasteries in India. It obviously focused on the textual sources — as it were, two corners of the 'triangle' of data described at the beginning — and did (and could) not get into a discussion of the archaeological evidence. I hope, however, that some of the problems with and around these textual sources have become clear, and that this will help to shape the awareness for a cautious interpretation of the 'data' which they contain. What is needed for a more fruitful contextualization of the different sources on Buddhist monasteries in India — again, in the triangle of normative–prescriptive (*Vinaya*), 'descriptive' (travelogues and other records), and material culture (archaeology and art history) — is 1) a collection of text passages as complete as possible

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[159] See e.g., Yijing *Record of the Inner Law* (T.2125.213c.18ff.): 又見多聞大德，或可一藏精研。眾給上房，亦與淨人供使，講說尋常，放免僧事，出多乘輿，鞍畜不騎。 "[I] also saw that well-learned *bhadanta*s who, for example, had studied intensively one *piṭaka* [of the canon], were given superior rooms by the *saṅgha*, also received lay servants to serve [them], normally gave lectures and were exempted from the [normal] duties of a monk; [when they] left [the monastery, they] often travelled in palanquins and never rode on a horse." According to the *Biography*, Xuanzang also received a special room and privileged treatment at Nālandā, because of his knowledge and reputation: T.2053.237a.19ff. (Li (trans.) 1995: 92f).

[160] See **Fig. 11** and Rajani 2016: 6ff and various maps.

[161] T.2125.220c.14ff. 那爛陀寺有十餘所大池，每至晨時寺鳴健稚令僧徒洗浴，人皆自持浴裙，或千或百俱出寺外，散向諸池各為澡浴。 ("At Nālandā, there are more than ten large ponds, and every morning the *gaṇḍī* of the monastery is rung to have the monks take [their] bath; all carry their bathing skirts, and sometimes thousands, sometimes hundreds go out of the monastery and go to the different ponds to take a bath.") This passage speaks of bathing ponds outside of the monastery (*siwai* 寺外), but this does not necessarily mean that all bathing ponds were outside of the inner ring wall of the Mahāvihāra. As long as there is no concrete archaeological evidence and based on the location of the ponds of various sizes (see **Fig. 11**), it is quite possible that the smaller ponds closer to the core of the monastery were reserved for the more eminent members of the *saṅgha* while many of the other monks had to go to the bigger ponds at the periphery.

[162] See **Figs. 10 & 11** and Rajani and Das 2018.

which 'describe' the materiality of the monasteries with reliable translations and commentaries, as well as 2) a 'database' of monastic sites which includes as much detailed information as possible on the pre-conservation status and 'superstructure' of the monasteries. The final 'reading-together' of all the collective data must be done with extreme care to avoid taking anything for granted through a literal interpretation of the textual sources and/or an overinterpretation of archaeological evidence.

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Buddhist Monasteries and Their Settlement Contexts in Early Medieval Magadha

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INTRODUCTION

In the early medieval period, there was a concentration of major Buddhist monastic establishments in the Magadha region, including Bodhgayā, Nālandā, and Vikramaśīla. Bodhgayā and Nālandā were known as major centers from the late 19th century, whereas Vikramaśīla was only discovered at the site of Antichak in the Bhagalpur district in the second half of the 20th century. Because of the textual references in Chinese and Tibetan accounts, these sites were immediately recognized as major centers, which was also confirmed through archaeological excavations. Several other sites with significant Buddhist remnants were also documented, such as Ghosrawan and Tetrawan (Nālandā district), Kurkihar, Guneri, Hasra Kol, and Dubba (Gayā district), Dariyapur Parvati (Nawada district), and Dharawat, Kauwadol, and Ghenjan (Jehanabad) (Fig.1). However, these sites were not identified straightway as major Buddhist establishments like Nālandā and Bodhgayā. This has begun to change more recently with the excavation of the sites of Telhara and Lalpahari (Lakhisarai district), both of which have revealed monastic seals, confirming the identity of their respective Buddhist establishments.[1] Monastic seals and sculptural remains from both of these sites confirm not only the presence of important monastic establishments but also their status as major/independent centers. Particularly relevant in this context is the monastic seal from Telhara that indicates the name of the monastic establishment as a *mahāvihāra* (Sanyal and Verma 2016: 12). In contrast, the other sites mentioned above, despite being recognized as monastic sites, have neither been excavated nor studied extensively. The distribution of these monastic sites in early medieval Magadha raises questions about their emergence and subsequent role in the spread and continuation of Buddhism in the region. How were these monasteries connected to the settlements and each other? Was there a network of institutions that was closely

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[1] Lalpahari was excavated between 2017 and 2020, resulting in the discovery of a monastic seal, sealings, sculptures, and a fortified monastic structure (Anil Kumar 2021: personal communication). Similarly, Telhara was excavated between 2010–13 and 2020–21. The first season resulted in the discovery of multiple monastic and royal seals, sealings, stone inscription land grant, sculptures, and a monastic structure (Sanyal and Verma 2016: 12; Verma 2012).

linked to the major centers such as Nālandā or Bodhgayā or did they function as independent units with their own authority in their geographical contexts?

RETHINKING SMALLER MONASTIC SITES

Many of these questions have been briefly raised in past scholarship but none has received a careful attention. A key reason for this lacuna is the marginalization of these monastic sites, such as Telhara and Kurkihar, which were explored and documented in the 19th century but not carefully examined thereafter. In part, this can be attributed to the removal of materials from these sites to various museums without proper documentation. None of these sites were either surveyed or excavated scientifically afterwards. Following the 19th (and even 20th) century pattern of extensive reliance on textual materials, especially accounts by Chinese pilgrims such as Xuanzang and Yijing,[2] to examine sites such as Bodhgayā, Rajgir, and Nālandā, the 19th century explorations of these other sites relied on the Chinese accounts (Stewart 2017). Archaeological means were used to merely confirm the information from texts, often without recording specific context of sculptures and other remains. Reports from recently excavated sites, such as Telhara, also rely exclusively on textual information, confirming the older method of textual archaeology. In the case of Telhara, a two-page brief excavation report was published, which over-emphasizes inscriptions and sculptures without reporting the specific stratigraphic contexts in which these objects were found (Verma 2012). Lalpahari is the only exception where we see a conscious effort to process and publish materials through a careful, scientific analysis (Kumar and Saha 2020).

Despite the significant collection of material remains from these monastic sites, they are often presented in the scholarship as 'smaller' centers, which highlights the scholarly assumptions about the nature of these sites. Were these sites really small or minor in their influence over the local settlements solely because of their location or size? Scholars often use the yardstick of Nālandā or Bodhgayā to compare and consequently declare these other sites to be minor without carefully evaluating their extent. This comparative method is problematic, since Nālandā and Bodhgayā have long been excavated and their extents are well known in contrast to these smaller sites, which have neither been carefully surveyed nor examined. Moreover, scholarly assumptions about these sites are now challenged by the recent discovery of several 8th–9th century seals from Telhara which identifies the monastic establishment as the *Prathamaśivapura mahāviharīya arya bhikṣusaṅghasya* ("[This is the seal] of the council of monks of the illustrious Prathamaśivapura mahāvihārā") (Sanyal and Verma 2016: 12). Similarly, several donative inscriptions refer to the *Āpaṇaka mahāvihāra,* which stood at Kurkihar between the 9th and 12th centuries (Bautze-Picron 2015: 20). If both of these were 'smaller' sites with a limited influence, why were they called a

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[2] See Li 1996 and 2000 respectively for translation of these travelogues.

mahāvihāra? This term has been used repeatedly for major monastic establishments such as Nālandā and Bodhgayā. This indicates the modern scholarly presumptions about these other sites as either 'small or insignificant' is flawed and needs to be re-examined. This also raises the issue of how these monasteries constructed a new model of monasteries in early medieval India, monasteries that were deeply embedded in their immediate local contexts.

Recently, Rajat Sanyal and Anil Kumar have attempted to examine the broader local context of the sites of Nālandā and Lalpahari respectively through a careful analysis of material assemblages. Kumar and Saha highlight the local context of Lalpahari by situating it within the Kṛimilā *viṣaya* (an administrative unit, like district), which is identified in inscriptions as an *adhiṣṭhāna* (a town/center for administration) (Kumar and Saha 2020: 42). Based on his previous survey of the district, Kumar also identifies at least 15 sites in proximity to this site, which were documented and carefully surveyed prior to the excavation of Lalpahari.[3] The archaeological assemblages from these sites reflect the diversity of the settlements as well as the religious history of the region (Kumar and Saha 2020: 44).

In his study of Nālandā, Rajat Sanyal specifically examines the village sealings which contain the names of a large number of settlements in the genitive form (i.e. showing possession or connection). Based on their terminology, these names can be divided into four categories: *grāma* (village), *agrahāra* (a rent-free village), *grāmajanapada* (a territorial segment of/around a village), and *haṭṭājanapada* (a territorial segment of/around a market). Sanyal uses the phonetic similarity in place names to identify the possible names of these settlements mentioned in the sealings. Based on his analysis, he located 8 *grāmas*, 13 *grāmajanapada*s, 1 *haṭṭājanapada* and 3 *agrāhāras*. Many of these new villages also contain archaeological materials from the early medieval period, which hints at their contemporaneity with Nālandā (Sanyal 2018: 12). Sanyal suggests that an intensive survey of these identified villages may provide clues to locate settlements surrounding Nālandā that played a crucial role in the sustenance of the monastery. Although this onomastic strategy may not be ideal, it does provide an approach which can be applied to locate the settlement context of these monastic sites. Drawing on the approaches of Kumar and Saha as well as Sanyal, the following section will examine the monastic sites of Telhara, Ghosrawan, Hargawan and Tetrawan, and Dariyapur Parvati to situate their emergence, development and broader settlement context in early medieval Magadha.

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[3] Anil Kumar previously surveyed the sites in the district of Lakhisarai (Kumar 2011). Using previous surveys and published inscriptions, he carefully examined the history of Kṛimilā *adhiṣṭhāna,* which has not received much attention in the study of early medieval Magadha. Scholarship has largely been focused on Nālandā, Bodhgayā and Vikramaśīla, reflecting the site centric approach of Archaeological Survey of India and other institutions.

Fɪɢ. 1 Monasteries of Magadha.
© Google Earth

Fɪɢ. 2 Bulandi Mound, Telhara.
Photo: author

MONASTERIES OF MAGADHA AND THEIR CONTEXTS

Telhara

Telhara has been identified as the monastic site of Telāḍhaka, about 32km west of the site of the Nālandā *Mahāvihāra*.[4] Several sculptures from this important site have been reported and examined in the past (Leoshko 1988; Biswas 2016). More recently, the excavation of the Bulandi mound resulted in the discovery of pottery, sculptures, royal and monastic sealings, and one stone inscription (Fig. 2). The digging exposed the walls of a monastery, inner chamber/ hall, and cells belonging to different periods.[5] Northern Black Polished (NBP) and its associated red and black ware were identified from the excavation of two cells in the northern part of the mound. This confirms that the site was a settlement from the early historic period (i.e., 3rd century BCE) onwards, with a monastery that was constructed at a later date. Through his analysis of structural remains, Verma tentatively suggests that the monastery was in existence during the Gupta period (Verma 2012: 2). The charcoal samples from the excavated locale of monastic cells have not yet been analyzed to suggest a specific date range.

Interestingly, a monastic seal from the site showed a *dharmacakra* (deer symbol), followed by two lines of writing underneath. Sanyal identifies the script as Siddhamātṛkā and dates it the 8th–9th century on paleographic grounds (Sanyal and Verma 2016: 12). This seal identifies the monastery as the Prathamaśivapura *Mahāvihāra* (Sanyal and Verma 2016:12). In a later article, Sanyal draws on the works of Sircar and Bhattacharya to argue that the patron of this monastery was a king named Prathamaśiva of Mathura, who also patronized the construction of a temple at Nālandā (Sanyal 2018: 299).[6] Sircar and Bhattacharya read the inscription found inside the temple during the excavation of Sarai mound and identified King Prathamaśiva as the patron. Sircar dated the inscription to the 8th century on paleographic grounds (Sircar 1971–2: 118). This was questioned by Bhattacharya, who compared the inscription with other inscriptions of the 6th and 7th centuries and correlated the content with the account of Xuanzang (Bhattacharya 1990: 132-3). He suggested that the script of this inscription is the transitional late-Brahmi and early Siddhamātṛikā, while the writing style is relatively similar to the Mahānāman inscription of Bodhgayā, which is dated to around 587 CE. Therefore, this inscription can be securely dated to the late 6th

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[4] Xuanzang describes this monastery as an impressive complex, consisting of four courtyards, three-storied pavilions, lofty terraces, and gates opening widely, leading to one another (Li 1996: 235). It was a reputed center at the time of Xuanzang's visit (approximately 636 CE). Cunningham also documented two donative inscriptions from the site, which confirm its identity as the site of Telāḍhaka (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt.): 168).

[5] The site is currently being excavated under the direction of Dr. B.K. Choudhary, director of Bihar Heritage Development Society. Recent excavations in 2020–21 have uncovered several new remains, including monastic seals and the structural remains of the monastery.

[6] The complete reading of the text was published by D.C. Sircar: Sircar 1971–2: 117–22.

century. If we accept Bhattacharya's date for this inscription, then this monastery may have existed in the late 6th century, when it was patronized by King Prathamaśiva of Mathura, which possibly led to its naming in his honor. However, until the excavation is completed and a detailed excavation report published, it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion on the date of this monastery.

Another mound at the northeast corner of the village is the site of the Sangi mosque and a cemetery (Fig. 3). This mosque has been constructed with pillars and other remains of a pre-existing shrine, which may have been Buddhist in nature. Asher dates this mosque to the 14th century (Asher 1989: 67). In fact, 75% of the village is located on the mounds, which raises the possibility of other monastic structures here. Construction activities and continuous settlement history have resulted in the destruction of these mounds. Therefore, it is crucial that a careful survey is conducted to ascertain the extent of this site.

A careful investigation of newly excavated sculptures and their proper contexts will facilitate a better understanding of the chronological development of this monastery. This chronological framework will then provide a specific temporal context in which to situate previously reported sculptures. The Maukhari seals, monastic sealings, and Pīṭhīpati stone inscription (Fig. 4) indicate patronage links with local polities in the 5th–6th and 13th centuries respectively. However, what remains unclear is the patronage links with its local context.

Telhara emerged and grew in a local and broader social context. The site itself has a prior settlement context, indicated by the early historic pottery. A number of settlement sites have been identified in the vicinity of Telhara in the survey of the Nālandā district. All of these sites are located within the Ekangarsarai block and its neighboring areas (Fig. 5). At least 11 of these sites have early historic origins, which is indicated by the surface collection of NBP ware, as well as associated Red, Black slipped, and Black and Red ware.[7] Most of these settlement sites continued through the early medieval period, which is attested by the prevalence of Red ware pottery (used as an identifier for the early medieval period) and sculptures. At least four of these early historic sites (Chaurai, Ekangardih, Kurwapar, and Mandachh) also hold sculptures that can be dated securely between the 8th and 12th centuries CE, confirming their activity through the early medieval period. In the early medieval period, 22 new sites emerged in this area. Six of these sites have been identified solely on the basis of Red ware pottery, 13 sites on the basis of Hindu and Buddhist sculptures, while two sites (Barsiawan and Dhurgaon) contain both sculptures and pottery from the early medieval period.[8] Of the 19 sites with sculptures, only two (Barsiawan and

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[7] See Choudhary 2015: 61–75. The following villages have been dated to the early historic period on the basis of ceramic collection from mounds and surrounding areas: Barari, Barki Mushari, Chaurai, Ekangardih, Khojpura, Kurwapar, Mandachh, Op, Oriawan, Pasanghi, and Rasulpur.
[8] The sites identified on the basis of pottery are Chamehra, Gulmichak, Madhopuar Amnar, Mahuabag, Muhammadpur, and Rasisa. The 14 sites identified on the basis of sculptures alone are Aungari, Bandraj,

Kurwapar) contain exclusively Buddhist imagery whereas eight sites contain exclusively Hindu sculptures. More importantly here, 10 sites contain both Buddhist and Hindu imagery, a pattern also noticed at Telhara and Nālandā.[9] Sites such as Aungari, Barsiawan, Dhurgaon, and Ekangardih have revealed images of Marīcī, Avalokiteśvara, Buddhas in *bhūmisparśamudrā* (earth-touching gesture) and *dharmacakraprāvartanamudrā* (turning the wheel of the Dharma gesture), Tārā, etc. (Choudhary 2015; Biswas and Majumdar 2014). The images were installed in these villages in 'settlement shrines/temples', where they were regularly worshipped by the laity (Amar 2010). It is likely that these 'settlement shrines/temples' were serviced by monks from Telhara, who were located close by. The monastic establishment of Telhara may have inspired the nearby settlements to install these images and so develop a lay base in the surrounding region.

Ghosrawan

Ghosrawan is located 16km southeast of the Biharsharif town, which is the district headquarter of Nālandā district.[10] Alexander Cunningham explored Ghosrawan between 1875 and 1878, and identified it as a Buddhist monastic site on the basis of his limited excavations and recently translated and published Virādeva inscription (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt): 173; Kielhorn 1888). He speculated that the monastery may have been a square of 120ft, surrounding a temple of 140ft in height and included a 34-square-foot temple with an arcade standing on the granite pillars. It also contained rows of rooms at the back for the monks (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt): 174, Plate XLIII). Cunningham's excavation was never followed up by any scientific excavation. Therefore, his conclusions about the structure and its measurements remain conjectural and can only be confirmed through a proper excavation.

The entire village is settled on a mound, the contours of which are visible on all sides from the surrounding agricultural fields (**Fig. 6**). The surface survey was conducted within and around the village at the edges of the mound to collect pottery. Potsherds of Black-slipped ware (shapeless), Black-and-Red ware (shapeless), and Black ware indicate a settlement in the early historic period (3rd–2nd century BCE) which continued through the early medieval period. This is confirmed by the Red ware pottery of flat-based bowls, storage jars, cooking pots, etc. and burnt bricks akin in size and shape to those used in the early medieval structures of the region (Choudhary 2015: 80). This is further attested by the coins of Vigrahapāla and fake copies of

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Bijokhari, Dahaur Bigha, Datu Bigha, Kosiawan, Kurwapar, Lapet Bigha, Madanpura, Mundipur, Pirojatola, Saidpur, and Teliyamai.

[9] On the presence of Hindu sculptures at Buddhists sites and inter-religious dynamics, see Amar 2012.

[10] In July 2013, I conducted a comprehensive exploration at the site of Ghosrawan, Hargawan, and Tetrawan along with a team of archaeologists from the Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna and documented potsherds, sculptures, and other remains.

FIG. 3 Sangi Mosque, Telhara.
Photo: author

FIG. 4 Pīṭhīpati stone inscription.
Photo: author

FIG. 5 Ekangarsarai Block, Nalanda.
Source: Choudhary 2015: Map 7

FIG. 6 Village Mound, Ghosrawan.
Photo: author

FIG. 7 Hindu deity at Āsā Devi temple,
Ghosrawan.
ca. 9th–10th century, 130 x 85 x 37cm
Photo: author

FIG. 8 Hindu deities at Devi-Sthān, Ghosrawan.
Photo: author

coins of Mahīpāla from the site (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt): 176–7). The pottery and other remains suggest an early historic settlement context in which a monastery may have emerged much later, similar to Telhara. Through an examination of the colophon of a manuscript of *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* , Jinnah Kim has suggested that the name of the village of Ghosrawan may have been Ghosāli-grāma in the 11th century CE (Kim 2012: 212).

Though the origin and detailed chronology of the monastery remains unclear, a number of sculptures and a stone inscription at the site confirm the existence of a monastery in the early medieval period. The Vīradeva stone inscription of Ghosrawan suggests Yaśovarmanpuravihāra as the name of this monastery (Kielhorn 1888: 311). It also suggests the construction of a *vihāra* and a temple here, and describes the temple as a lofty building comparable to the peak of Mount Kailaśa or Mandara. Does this mean that the name of the village was Ghośali-grāma, whereas the *vihāra's* name was Yasovarmanpuravihāra? The Vīradeva inscription is somewhat opaque on this question and does not provide a conclusive answer. The name of the monastery is not mentioned in the colophon that Kim has examined. Despite these lacunae, the number and variety of sculptures at this site certainly indicates a major Buddhist establishment. The sculptures here can be stylistically assigned to a period between the 7th and 13th centuries CE.

Several sculptures from this site are also in the Indian Museum, Kolkata and other state and district museums. For instance, a 9th-century four-armed Khaṣarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara is housed in the Indian Museum (Huntington 1984: 119). The site contains multiple Hindu sculptures of Viṣṇu, Umā-Maheśvara, Durgā, Suryā, and Gaṇeśa as well as Buddhist sculptures, which are housed in different temples (Āsā devī temple), shrines (Devī-sthān, Durgā-sthān), and houses (Figs 7 & 8). These include a twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara, an image of the Buddha's birth, the Buddha taming the Nālāgiri elephant, an image of Buddha's descent from Trāyastrimśa heaven, an *Aṣṭamahāpratihārya* image of the Buddha's eight major life-events (Fig. 9),[11] several images of the Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* including one in which the goddess Aparājita is depicted at the bottom, a six-armed Avalokiteśvara image, and several others. The range, variety, and monumental scale of some of these images clearly highlights its importance as a major establishment. Ghosrawan is in the Giriyak block of Nālandā district, where at least three other early medieval sites have been identified (Giriyak, Girivraja hill, and Ghora Katora) with pottery, sculptures, and structural remains. Two of these sites contain Buddhist sculptures, hinting at the presence of 'settlement shrines'. Giriyak block is adjacent to the urban site of Rajgir, which is a major early historic settlement and Buddhist center that continued through the medieval period.

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[11] These are his birth, enlightenment, turning the wheel of the Dharma, death, teaching (especially at the Jetavanavihāra), descending from Trāyastrimśa heaven, setting out the monastic rules of conduct, and taming the elephant at Nālāgiri.

Fig. 9 *Aṣṭamahāpratihārya* (image of Buddha's life-events), Ghosrawan.
ca. 9th–10th century, 165 x 60 x 32cm
Photo: author

Hargawan

In close proximity to Ghosrawan, there are at least three other villages — Hargawan and Tetrawan and Dariyapur Parvati — at which archaeological remains and Buddhist sculptures have been reported. The current village of Hargawan is settled on a mound, which has been cut through at several places. Parts of this mound are visible near the graveyard of this village **(Fig. 10)**. A survey of the village led to the collection of potsherds of NBP ware, its associated Red ware, Black-slipped ware and Red ware as well as Lakhauri bricks. A mound, probably a structural remain, was also noticed on the northwest corner of the village of the Hargawan. It is located at the edge of the settlement and north of a huge tank, which conforms to the pattern of monastic sites. The ceramic evidence suggests an early historic settlement that continued through the early medieval and medieval periods. A mound to the north of the village (and west of Digi tank) was noted and subsequently excavated by Broadley (Broadley 1872: 283). He discovered a series of cells (12ft x 4–5ft) running north to south, each with thick partition walls. In one of the cells, he found a Buddha image, and several carvings on the mound itself (Broadley 1872: 283). Based on his documentation and findings, Broadley suggested that the name 'Hargawan' may have drawn from *Vihāra-grāma*. All of this suggests a strong Buddhist connection, which can only be confirmed through a careful excavation of the site.

Hargawan is located in the Asthawan block of Nālandā, which has three early historic sites (Asthawan, Hargawan, and Kaila) that continued through the early medieval period. All these sites contain early medieval pottery and sculptures. Six other villages (Benar, Jana, Jiyar, Malti, Rajawar, and Sherpur) also contain early medieval pottery (Red ware) and sculptures (Hindu and Buddhist). Out of these nine villages, five contain Hindu and Buddhist sculptures, whereas two contain only Buddhist sculptures. The presence of these sculptures hints at the 'settlement shrines', thereby suggesting the link between this monastic site and its local context.

Tetrawan

The village of Tetrawan is located on top of a mound **(Fig. 11)**. Three other mounds were documented by Broadley and Cunningham during their respective surveys (Broadley 1872: 277–9; Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt.):182–4, Plate XLIV). Cunningham's map of the site locates each of these mounds, and he suggests that a fortified mound (castle mound) was the site of at least two *vihāras*, which was later reused for constructing a fort.[12] Another mound, located northeast

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[12] Cunningham and Broadley also noticed fortified structures at Tetrawan, Ghosrawan, and Dariyapur Parvati, which they thought represented later occupation of these sites. The excavation of Lalpahari has revealed a fortified monastery, which had three circular bastions on each side, despite being on a hilltop (Kumar and Saha 2020: 46). This pattern has also been noticed at Jagjivanpur in the West Bengal (Roy 2012: 29). Therefore, it is likely that these contemporaneous monastic sites may have become fortified structures.

FIG. 10 Village Mound, Hargawan.
Photo: author

FIG. 11 Village Mound (from south), Tetrawan.
Photo: author

of this mound and north of the village, was the site of another monastery. The village mound, located east of the castle mound, had an oblong mound of brick ruin, rising 20ft above the surrounding agricultural fields, which seemed to be a platform for two *stūpa*s. Several rooms, 8–10ft wide, were on the outer side of the structure, which may have been cells or chapels (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt): 183). Cunningham's (and Broadley's) reconstruction of the structural history of the site is somewhat conjectural and cannot be taken at face value. He did not find any sculptures from these sites, which makes the identification of this structure as a monastery difficult to con-firm. However, Cunningham did excavate two mounds near the Balam tank which was located south of the village and contained a colossal image of the Buddha. He discovered two brick *stūpa*s of 18ft diameter each. Both *stūpa*s, approximately 18ft apart, were placed on the same platform with the image in between them.[13] Broadley found several inscribed images, one of which mentions a place named Tentadi-grāma, where a certain donor set up an image of a goddess (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt):184). Based on the similar-sounding name and location, Cunningham suggests Tentadi-grāma to be the name of this site. Other donative inscriptions confirm Pāla period activity here, since at least one of them refers to the reign of Śrī-Rāmapāla deva (Patil 1963: 574).

Along with a colossal Buddha image, multiple other Buddha images have been reported and examined at the site. Two Buddha images, currently housed in the Indian Museum, are from the late 7th century (Asher 1980: 44, Plate 78) and the late 8th or early 9th century respectively (Asher 1980: 67, Plate 180; Huntington 1984: 120, Plate 141).[14] The colossal Buddha image can itself be dated to the 9th–10th century (**Fig. 12**). The site also contains images of Mārīcī, standing Buddha (**Fig. 13**), Buddha in *dhyānamudrā* (meditation gesture), votive *stūpa*s, and Hindu gods and goddesses. All of this clearly highlights that it was probably a site of a major Buddhist monastic establishment (Choudhary 2015: 13–16).

Tetrawan is located in the Biharsharif block, which is also the headquarter of Nālandā district. Biharsharif town is also the site of Uddaṇḍāpura (Patil 1963: 44–55). Apart from Bihar-sharif, there are five villages (Dumrawan, Korai, Mandachh Khurd, Tungi, and Tiuri) in this block with pottery from the early historic period, suggesting early historical settlements (Choudhary 2015: 31-42). All of these communities persisted through the early medieval period, with four of them developing into 'settlement shrines', as indicated by the documentation of Hindu and Buddhist sculptures. Five other settlements (Maghra, Nagwan, Paharpur, Sahokhar, Upraura) emerged in the early medieval period and almost all of them also contain sculptures. Paharpur and

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[13] Is this a pattern noticeable at Nālandā and other sites? In this volume, Shimada touches upon the idea of the transition from *stūpa* to image, as many pre-existing *stūpa* sites were converted into image shrines.
[14] For a detailed discussion of the iconography and dating, see Asher 1980: 51 & 58 and Huntington 1984: 119–120.

Upraura contain only Buddhist sculptures, which hints at the development of 'settlement shrines/temples' in these villages (Choudhary 2015) and a lay base in the local region.

Dariyapur Parvati

Dariyapur Parvati is a village with a hill named Parvati located south of the village. During his survey of the hill, Beglar found at least 13 large mounds and five or six smaller mounds which contained burnt bricks and stones (Beglar 1878/2000 (rpt): 108-9). He excavated a previously dug mound on the northern side of the hill, which led to the discovery of a part of the lower circumference of a brick-built *stūpa* (15–18ft in diameter). He also noticed another *stūpa*-like structure from the digging undertaken by the Public Works Department and local villagers. Cunningham explored the upper part of the hill during his visit and noticed a basement of a building made with lime mortar, which also had 16 granite pillar stumps. These stumps may have formed the verandah of the courtyard of a square building or a temple, which was ornamented with flowered and beaded stucco moldings (Cunningham 1882/2000 (rpt): 9–10). Currently, there is a temple on top of the mound, with a half cut-through mound on the eastern side still visible (Fig. 14). Most of the mounds have been substantially disturbed and are plastered now with rock sheets.

Apart from the mounds on the hill, two other mounds were also documented in the village and its adjoining area. The first mound was west of the current village, where Cunningham saw wedge-shaped bricks and so identified it as a *stūpa* structure. The second mound was about 3.5km north of the village along the old channel of the Sakri River. This latter mound was heavily damaged by the river as well as treasure hunting (Patil 1963: 97).

The hill site contains a mausoleum and a temple of Mahamai, which was also reported by Cunningham (Cunningham 1882/2000 (rpt): 9–10). During my survey in 2009 and 2015, I noticed an 8th-century Jambhala image on the hill (Fig. 15). I also noted a 9th–10th century Buddha image in *dharmacakramudrā* with partially broken hands, a half-broken image of Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā*, and several other sculptural and architectural fragments at the northern base of the hill. Cunningham found a lac seal that represented the upper part of a tall temple (Cunningham 1882/2000 (rpt): 9, Plate VI). He also found terracotta sealings pieces representing a border row of a *stūpa*, and a shapeless, unbaked clay lump with four impressions of a monastic seal. Cunningham could only read two works of the much-damaged seal as *Rodakśa saṅghasa* (Rodakśa' monastery(?)), which indicated some sort of *saṅgha* at the site.[15] All of these confirm early medieval activity at the site. Interestingly, the site is located a kilometer north of Apshad, which itself contained a major Viṣṇu temple patronized by the later Gupta rulers of

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[15] Cunningham attempted to identify this site as the Pigeon Monastery, based on his reading of Faxian and Xuanzang's accounts (Cunningham 1882/2000 (rpt): 6–8). He also drew from the similar sounding name of "Pārbati" as denoting pigeon. I have consciously omitted those details to avoid working with a text-based archaeology approach that has been rightly questioned and discarded.

FIG. 12 Seated Buddha, Tetrawan.
ca. 9th–10th century, 290 x 220 x 85cm
Photo: author

FIG. 13
Standing Buddha,
Tetrawan.
ca. 9th century, 155 x 75x 30cm
Photo: author

FIG. 14 Hill site, Dariyapur Parvati.
Photo: author

FIG. 15 Jambhala, Dariyapur Parvati.
ca. 8ᵗʰ century, 105 x 55 x 40cm
Photo: author

Magadha (Patil 1963: 6–7). Additionally, the sites of Hargawan, Ghosrawan, and Tetrawan are in close proximity, which hints at a shared local context.

SETTLEMENT SHRINES, SEALS AND LINKS WITH LOCAL CONTEXT

The previous section highlights the monastic sites and their neighboring and adjoining settlements, which contained 'settlement shrines/temples'. All of these settlements/ villages are located in the administrative unit of the modern block within a district, which is somewhat arbitrary but still demonstrates the broader local context. In the case of each of the above-discussed monastic sites, there is no direct evidence of any priestly service from the monastic establishment to these neighboring settlements. Despite this, the links between these sites and their settlements can be traced through the settlement shrines that contained Buddhists sculptures, which hints at local lay support. This is further affirmed by the stylistic similarity between the Buddhist and Hindu sculptures of these sites and monasteries, which were clearly produced in the same ateliers.

This link between monasteries and their surrounding settlements is also evident from the study of the seals of Nālandā. Of these, a particular seal mentions the name of the village Aṅgāmi, which has been identified with the village of Aungari (near Telhara) in the Ekangarsarai block. The seal specifically mentions "*ŚrīNālandā-pratibaddha-Āṅgāmi-grama-vihārastha-jānapadsya*", which has been translated by Sastri as "Of the Municipal Office located in the Monastery of the village of Aṅgāmi attached to the illustrious Nālandā" (Sastri 1942: 47). Sastri suggests that a municipal office was located in the monastery of Aṅgāmi village, which was also linked to Nālandā. This raises the possibility of another monastery at Aṅgāmi. Chattopadhyaya has discussed the usage of term *pratibaddha* ('attached') in inscriptions in his study of rural settlements (Chattopadhyaya 1994: 78). He argues that the usage of this term suggests a link between a certain unit of villages and an administrative division like *Viṣaya* or *adhiṣṭhāna*, and overtime, these units may have emerged as "nuclei of some kind of local control over the surrounding areas." The usage of this term in the Nālandā seal indicates a link between Aṅgāmi, Nālandā, and the surrounding villages (Sanyal 2018: 308). Does this mean that Aṅgāmi contained a rural monastery which also acted as a satellite center of Nālandā and an administrative unit for surrounding villages? It is likely that this monastery/municipal office was run by Buddhist monks, who were connected to both Aṅgāmi and Nālandā.[16] Sites such as Aṅgāmi (or Aungari) hint at the role of monastic community in creating nuclei that not only facilitated the development of rural monasteries but also actively created a strong lay base in Magadha. Further, the municipal office of Aṅgāmi may have been connected to multiple other settlements in the region.

The sites of Telhara, Ghosrawan, Hargawan, and Tetrawan have revealed pottery remains

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[16] On the administrative roles of monks, see Silk 2008. Another seal with the term '*pratibaddha*' has recently been excavated at Rukmini-sthān, near Nalanda (Krishnamurthy and Srivastava 2020: 149).

from the early historic period, suggesting the possibility of the emergence of these monasteries in a specific settlement context. At all of these sites, multiple mounds were noticed and documented in the 19th century. Cunningham and other archaeologists identified and often stressed that all of these mounds were remains of Buddhist structures such as *stūpa*s, *vihāra*s, or temples. They never really considered the possibility of some of these mounds being settlement mounds. The fact that Ghosrawan and Tetrawan were also identified as Ghośali *grāma* and Tentadi *grāma* may indicate an adjacent settlement context for at least these two sites. It is likely that all of these sites had a similar context, which can be only identified through a careful excavation of these sites.

GROWTH AND SUSTENANCE

While exploring the issues of subsistence and social base of Buddhist monasteries, scholars have often overemphasized royal patronage for their major growth in early medieval Magadha, particularly the Buddhist affiliation of the Pāla kings. Though a few royal seals and inscriptions of Pāla and other major political dynasties have been reported from Nālandā and Vikaramaśīla, the majority of them record the patronage of either local political powers or commoners (Furui 2017: 346). No royal inscriptions have been found to date from the sites of Ghosrawan, Hargawan, Tetrawan, and Dariyapur Parvati. Telhara received grants from King Prathamaśiva of Mathura, some Maukari kings as indicated by their two royal seals, and a donation from the Piṭhīpati rulers in the 13th century. These limited grants cannot have sustained a monastic establishment for 6–7 centuries, establishments which also had to continually develop relationships with new ruling elites in order to maintain their pre-existing grants and attract new ones. Therefore, this narrative of exclusive royal patronage and its role in the development of Buddhism in the early medieval Magadha needs to be revised.

All of these rural monasteries revealed impressive collections of Buddhist and Hindu sculptures, which points to a substantial patronage base in the early medieval period. Many inscribed sculptures were donated by local residents. Two donative inscriptions have been reported from Ghosrawan. The first one (on a Buddhist sculpture) refers to a certain Bhādanta Revaśanti, while the second one (on a Singavāhinī Durga sculpture) records the gift of a certain Dharma Ghosha for the benefit of his parents (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt): 175). Similarly, there exists at least four donative inscriptions at Tetrawan. One of these inscriptions is on the pedestal of an image of a goddess with a child in her lap who is identified as Puṇḍeśvarī/Vasti (goddess of fecundity). This image was donated by a certain Chandraka, son of Vishnu at a place called Tentadi-grāma (Cunningham 1880/2000 (rpt): 184), which may have been name of the settlement. Images of Puṇḍeśvarī/Vasti have also been found at Ghosrawan and Lalpahari (Lakhisarai district), which indicates her importance within the region. Bautze-Picron has discussed how this form may have been shared by Hindu and Buddhist traditions (Bautze-Picron 1991–2: 242), which also led to her

gradual incorporation in the Buddhist monasteries and 'settlement-shrines/temples' (Davidson *in this volume*). Is it plausible to think that the beginning of these assimilations/incorporations may have been a direct result of their largely rural context? If this was the case, then this also reflects *saṅgha's* ability to develop specific strategies to construct a broad social base in the hinterland.

What may have further facilitated strong links with the surrounding society was the *saṅgha's* awareness of local geography and the ability to manipulate that for the socio-economic development of the region.[17] A careful study of the locational and settlement contexts of these monasteries revealed multiple water bodies, channels, and the traditional *āhara* and *pyne* system in a proximate area.[18] Telhara is situated in a narrow strip of land between the Sona and Kattar Rivers. Both of these rivers are seasonal and their water is diverted through *pynes* for irrigation work. Also, a tank is located at the southeast corner of the Bulandi mound, which may have been fed by a pyne. Similarly, the Shahu/Seth tank is located on the southwest corner of the Ghosrawan village and two tanks — Dighi tank and Balam/Bhairav tank (1160ft × 780ft) — are located west and south of Tetrawan (**Fig. 16**). Rajani has analyzed the shapes, location and layout in her study of water bodies of Nālandā, which indicates that they were carefully planned. She suggests that these water bodies were largely geometrical — squares or rectangular, with sides roughly parallel to the four cardinal directions (Rajani 2016: 7). She further suggests that the largest tank of Dighi pokhar at Nālandā was river-fed by a palaeochannel. At the southern and eastern sides of Ghosrawan and Tetrawan villages, the *āhara* and *pyne* system was also documented. This was connected to the Sakri River, which is located within one kilometer east of both these villages. Similarly, Hargawan is connected to the Sakri River through the Bargina *nala* (*pyne*) in the village whereas the Sugiya River flows through the village. Further ground explorations and scientific analysis (archaeo-botanical and palaeochannels) of these water systems would be able to prove whether these hydraulic mechanisms were connected and worked in the past as well.

The location of monasteries at the edge of these water bodies hints that these monasteries did enjoy some degree of influence over them. If monasteries such as Telhara received land-

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[17] This idea draws from Chattopadhyaya's discussion of rural sites that emerged as the nuclei for regional growth (Chattopdhyaya 2017: 78).

[18] *āharas* (three-sided earthen embanked tanks); *pynes* ('channels'). Despite a traditionally low annual rainfall (less than 45in/1.143 mm), the plains of Magadha are over 52% irrigated, which is uncritically attributed to colonial irrigation projects (Bose and Ghosh 1976: 5). The key reason for this widespread irrigation is that the traditional irrigation system, locally termed the *āhara* and *pyne* system, is based on the drainage and rainfall pattern of the region. At present, there are 0.5 million hectares of land irrigated by 8000 *āharas* and related *pynes*, with about 10,000km of embankment in this region. The feeder *pynes* alone may add up to 5000km, in addition to the vast distribution network (Sengupta 2001: 42). This distribution of *āharas and pynes* demonstrates the importance of this traditional irrigation mechanism in the region.

grants, they had to find ways to utilize that land through a water management system for agricultural production. This may hint at the role of monks in managing these monastic lands. Evidence for temples managing land grants with extensive irrigation systems have been documented in southern India (Heitzman 1997: 37–54) whereas monastic management of irrigation network and land management has also been attested in Sri Lanka (Gunwardhana 1979: 72–7). Yijing mentions that the monks at Tamralipti monastery engaged in renting out farms and sharecropping (Li 2000: 60–1). Despite the lack of any inscriptional evidence in the Magadha region, the geographic proximity of monasteries to these water bodies and irrigation systems seems to suggest such a pattern across Magadha.

DISTRIBUTION PATTERN

Several seals from Nālandā and Vikramaśīla identify them as *mahāvihāra*. Both of these sites are known to be major establishments with multiple monasteries from Chinese and Tibetan textual sources. At Nālandā, 11 monasteries have been excavated, whereas only one major monastery has been excavated at Vikramaśīla, though several other as yet unexcavated mounds exist in close proximity. Together, these two sites illustrate a pattern. This does not seem to be the case at Telhara, where only one monastery has been excavated to date. However, the monastic seal from the site uses the title *mahāvihāra*. Does this mean that there was no one model of *mahāvihāra* even within the Magadha region?

At Nālandā, several sites in the vicinity of Nālandā have been identified and excavated **(Fig. 17)**. Juafardih, Begampur and Rukmini-sthān at Jagdishpur have been excavated in last two decades **(Figs 18 & 19)**. Excavations of these sites confirmed their early historic and early medieval context (Mani 2005–6; Saran 2006–7; Mishra 2007–8; Lama and Kumar 2016: Lama et. al 2016). The surrounding villages of Bargaon and Surajpur are also located on mounds and contain multiple sculptures. More recently, Rajani has identified Begampur as the site of a massive monastic structure through an analysis of satellite imagery and Digital Elevation Model (DEM) (Rajani 2016: 17). She has also conducted AMS (accelerator mass spectrometry) dating of brick samples from the sites of Kapatiya, Begampur, and Bargaon, which revealed dates of ca. 266 BCE, 9th century CE and ca. 848 BCE respectively (Das et. al 2019: 625). All of these suggest a cluster of monasteries at Nālandā, which were spread in the vicinity of the current site and may have constituted a Nālandā complex. This may have been a result of the organic growth of the monastic establishments over a long period of time. However, whether they were independent monastic establishments or parts of one major establishment is unclear.

FIG. 16 Dighi Tank, Tetrawan
Photo: author

FIG. 17 Map of sites in the vicinity of Nalanda.
Source: Choudhary 2015: Map 20

FIG 18 Rukmini-Sthāna, Jagdishpur.
Photo: author

FIG. 19 Garhpar, Jagdishpur.
Photo: author

This cluster pattern is also discerned in the geographical proximity of Ghosrawan, Hargawan, Tetrawan, and Dariyapur Parvati. This cluster of monasteries and temples in geographical proximity seems to suggest a certain distribution pattern of monastic establishments in the rural areas. There is no evidence to conclusively argue which one emerged first but their contemporaneity and connectivity is illustrated in the ceramics and sculptures. The typological and stylistic analysis of multiple sculptures from these four sites indicates that they were probably produced at the same atelier. They also contain monumental sculptures, which hints at a strong lay base and longevity. Therefore, these four could be considered a complex like Nālandā. A similar argument has been made in the context of Somapura *mahāvihāra*, which suggests different types of structures and monasteries constituting a *mahāvihāra* (Sen, Rahman, and Ahsan 2014: 50).

CONCLUSION

While questioning the over-emphasis on early Buddhist monasticism (as the original version) and Buddhist monasteries, Gregory Schopen suggests that we should begin to carefully study the multiple models of monasticism and monasteries. It would be better to focus on "what they at given places at given points had become" (Schopen 2004: 2). He further writes:

> ...we might begin to meaningfully talk about 'early' and 'early medieval' and medieval' and 'late' Buddhist monasticisms and to study each of these in their own right and not, for example, as mere exemplifications of the decline and degeneration of some 'early' and largely assumed single 'ideal'. Each of these monasticisms will need to be understood and evaluated on its own terms, and this of course will not be easy. (Schopen 2004: 2)

Schopen clearly highlights the necessity for moving away from a central assumed ideal of Buddhist monasticism and monasteries. This chapter draws from Schopen and also demonstrates a much more fragmented picture of Buddhist monasteries in early medieval Magadha. Even within a particular region, there was no one dominant model of monasteries. Magadha did have Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, and Bodhgayā as major centers that could house hundreds of monks but it also had Telhara, Ghosrawan, Tetrawan, Hargawan, and Dariyapur Parvati in the rural hinterland, which were relatively smaller and deeply embedded in the local socio-religious context. Their growth and continuation through the early medieval period also illustrate the penetration of Buddhist monastic establishments in the rural areas and smaller settlements, which calls into question the view that Buddhism lost its lay social base and was confined to the monastic precincts. Andre Wink writes:

> ...that by the 12th century, a Buddhist lay population hardly existed. In so far as it did, it was not a cohesive and clearly definable community. Buddhism had

not penetrated the lives of vast mass of the Indian peasant population in a way that could have guaranteed the religion's survival outside the monastic precincts. Indian Buddhism had become an almost exclusively monastic religion, found in a small number of religious establishments in the "eastern tract, in Magadha where they were not only few in number but also large in size. (Wink 2002: 334–5)

Clearly, this chapter presents an alternate story for Buddhism, countering this argument by contending that Buddhism continued to grow with the emergence of these new monasteries in rural areas. As the Buddhist monastics moved into the rural landscape, they developed new strategies to develop concrete links with local settlements through 'settlement shrines/temples', incorporation of local deities, and strategically locating their monasteries along with water bodies and irrigation structures. Reliance on royal support always necessitated a negotiation with the ruling elite due to political flux. This may not have been easy given their rural location. In contrast, a better strategic approach was to build long-lasting relationships and a new model of patronage with the rural settlements, as reflected in the wide distribution of Buddhist imagery. The *saṅgha*'s familiarity and engagement with the local landscape, society, and their ability to develop a new model of patronage facilitated their long-term sustainability in the Magadha region.

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Apotropaic Power and Ritual Efficacy in the Buddhist Art of Medieval Bengal:
Observations on the Terracotta Sculptures of Nandadīrghi *vihāra*

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INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist monastery identified as Nandadīrghi *vihāra* first came to light with the chance discovery in 1987 at Jagjivanpur (Malda District, West Bengal) of an inscribed copper-plate grant issued in the seventh year of the reign of the Pāla monarch Mahendrapāladeva (Sengupta 1999: 79).[1] This inscription, assigned to the mid-9th century CE, recorded a petition to Mahendrapāladeva, sent via a royal messenger (*dūtakamukhena*), of a military official (*mahāsenāpati*) named Vajradeva for the grant of a tract of land (*udraṅga*) to a *vihāra* he had constructed in the district of Nandadīrghika, (*nandadīrghikodraṅge mayā vihāraḥ kāritaḥ*) "for the increase of merit" of his mother and father, himself and all living beings (*yathā mātā-pitrōr ātmanaḥ sakalasya ca satva-rāśēḥ puṇyābhivṛiddhaye*). The recipients of the grant were designated as fourfold: the noble community of monks comprised of the eight great individuals (*aṣṭa-mahāpuruṣa-pudgalārya-bhikṣu-saṅghasya*), a group of noble, irreversible bodhisattvas (*āryāvaivarttika-bodhisatva-gaṇasya*), the abode of all dharma-guides (?) beginning with the Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitādi sakala dharma-nettrī sthānasya)* and the Blessed One, the Buddha, the Illustrious One (*bhagavato Buddha-bhaṭṭārakasya*).[2] The purpose of the grant was further designated to be for worship and copying (of texts, presumably), for the provision

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[1] Subsequent to the initial notice of its discovery, this copper-plate inscription has been edited and translated on several occasions; see Sastri 1991/92; Ramesh and Iyer 1992; Bhattacarya 1999; Mukherji 1999; Bhattacarya 2007.

[2] The precise referent of the phrase for one of the recipients of the grant (*"prajñāpāramitādi sakala dharmanettrī sthānasya"*) is elusive. It is not unique, as it occurs in at least two other inscriptions of the Pāla period – in the well-known grant of Devapāla from Nalanda (Sastri 1986: 98, line 38) and another later grant issued during the reign of Gopāla II (Furui 2008: 73, line 48). The term '*sthāna*' appearing here is typically employed to refer to a place, so this phrase could possibly describe a type of library housing '*dharma-nettrī*' or 'guides to/of the dharma', or perhaps even a more sanctified space with a repository of manuscripts. Another speculative possibility, in light of the fact that along with the Buddha, the other recipients identified in the grant were groups of people (monks and bodhisattvas), may be that '*dharma-nettrī*' was used as an epithet for a person or a group of individuals, possibly referring to a type of preacher or group of preachers.

of monastic requisites (robes, bowls, bedding, seats, and medicines), as well as for periodic repairs to the *vihāra* (*yathārthaṁ pūjanalekha(pa)-nādyarthaṁ cīvara-piṇḍapāta-śayan-āśana-glana-pratyaya-bhaiṣajya-pariṣkārādyarthaṁ khaṇḍa-sphuṭita-samādhan-artha[ṁ]*) (Bhattacarya 2007: 68, lines 40–3).

Although the endowment articulated in this copper-plate inscription carried the imprimatur of royal sanction, the initial establishment of the monastery built by Vajradeva can be recognized as an instance of more localized patronage, conforming, as Furui has observed, to a widespread pattern in the Pāla period in which regional subordinate officials sought to extend their local political authority through engaging in pious foundations (Furui 2011: 151; 2017: 346; 2020: 143). Subsequent to the discovery of the copper-plate charter of Mahendrapāladeva, excavations conducted between 1992 and 2005 in the Jagjivanpur area revealed the remains of a single quadrangular-type *vihāra*, confirmed as the structure referred to by Vajradeva in his inscription by seals found at the site incised with the text "*śrī vajradeva-karita-nandadīrghi-vihāriyārya-bhikṣusaṅghasya*" (Sengupta 1999: 80; Roy 2012: 29–32). The excavated *vihāra* appears to have been the only residential structure at the site, which, consequently, could only have housed a fairly small monastic community. This stands in marked contrast, of course, to other well-known and far more extensive monastic complexes of the medieval period in eastern India, such as the *mahāvihāras* at Nalanda, Paharpur, and Antichak, as well as the cluster of *vihāras* built in the Mainamati region. In spite of its comparatively diminutive size — and almost certainly — status, though, the rich art historical material recovered from Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, foremost amongst which is an extensive corpus of sculpted terracotta plaques, provides a potentially valuable, and as yet under-utilized, evidential base which might further inform our still nascent understanding of the visual and ritual landscape of medieval eastern India. This is particularly so, it would seem, in regard to the variegated roles of sculptural art within medieval Buddhist monastic architectural contexts.

THE TERRACOTTA SCULPTURES FROM NANDADĪRGHI *VIHĀRA*: A BRIEF SURVEY

In addition to the main *vihāra* structure, excavations carried out at Jagjivanpur recovered "from the debris of the collapsed super-structure of the monastery along the outer wall" a substantial corpus of 479 terracotta sculpted plaques in a remarkable state of preservation (Roy 2012: 88).[3]

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[3] The bulk of this sculptural corpus is currently retained in the holdings of the State Archeological Museum, West Bengal and the Malda District Museum. This survey is primarily based only on a preliminary study of the materials available to me which consisted of approximately a quarter (117) of the extant corpus published in Roy 2012, along with a small number of additional plaques from the reserve collection of the State Archeological Museum, West Bengal, access to which was graciously provided by Dr. Sharmila Saha, Keeper of Collections, State Archeological Museum, West Bengal; comprehensive documentation and study of the entire collection of surviving plaques remains a desideratum.

Lamentably, none of these plaques was found *in situ*, but given their findspot, it would appear likely that they were once embedded along the lower exterior brick walls of the *vihāra* in a single row forming a continuous decorative frieze (Roy 2012: 96). Each plaque appears to have been hand-molded out of levigated clay, and have slightly variant dimensions, measuring, on average, approximately 30cm x 25xcm x7cm (Roy 2012: 94–5). These plaques exhibit an extensive and diverse arrangement of exclusively non-narrative motifs, which, for practical purposes, can be divided into three general categories: the representation of specific Buddhist figures and themes, pan-Indian divinities, and secular or temporal figures, such as numerous animals, musicians, dancers, martial figures, as well as devotees bearing garlands or other offerings.

There are at least two surviving images of Buddhas, both depicted seated in *padmāsana* and displaying *bhūmisparśamudrā* (**Fig. 1**). There is one additional plaque (**Fig. 2**) that may also represent a Buddha, though its identification is less secure. This image shows a male figure seated in *padmāsana* on a cushion with over-sized round earrings and a distinctive jeweled necklace, wearing a crown, unfortunately abraded, over long locks of hair falling across his shoulders, displaying what may be identifiable as the *bodhyaṅgī mudrā*, with the index figure of the left hand clasped by the fingers of the right. These iconographic elements are found in images that have been identified as the Buddha Vairocana, such as in a comparable 10th century image from Udayagiri in Orissa (Donaldson 2001: 106, Figure 144). There are three identifiable representations of Mahāyāna bodhisattvas, including two of Avalokiteśvara (**Fig. 3**), and one of Mañjuśrī (**Fig. 4**). The former is shown seated in *lalitāsana* displaying *varada mudrā*, clad only in a *dhotī* with long matted locks (*jaṭā*), heavy round earrings, and a necklace with his attribute of a long-stemmed lotus held in his left hand. Mañjuśrī, in a particularly well-preserved plaque, is depicted seated in *padmāsana*, also displaying *varada mudrā* with matted locks, necklace, armbands, and typical tripartite hairstyle, with his attribute of a book atop a lotus held in his left hand. Another plaque with the possibility of being a specific Buddhist personality is an image of a bejeweled female figure seated in *lalitāsana* (**Fig. 5**) with a canopy of seven cobras behind her head and another held in her left hand. Although often identified as the goddess Manasā, protectress against snake bite, in this context, this figure may be more aptly recognized as Jāṅgulī.[4] At least one plaque depicting a *stūpa* survives (**Fig. 6**), as well as an image of a *dharmacakra* (**Fig. 7**), along with one image with a manuscript placed on a lotus (**Fig. 8**). Given the reference in the copper-plate grant — nebulous as it may be — this may have been intended as a representation of one of the *prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* (cf. Khettry 2003).

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[4] For the complexities involved in distinguishing these two goddesses, both venerated for protection against snake bite and who appear to share virtually identical iconographies, see the useful discussion and sources cited in Donaldson 2001: 402–7 and more recently Guy 2019: 325–33.

Fɪɢ. 1
Buddha, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

Fɪɢ. 2
Vairocana (?), Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State
Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

Fɪɢ. 3
Avalokiteśvara, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

Fɪɢ. 4
Mañjuśrī, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State
Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

Fig. 5
Manasā / Jāṅgulī, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

Fig. 6
Stūpa, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of
State Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 7
Dharmacakra, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 8
Manuscript atop a Lotus, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State
Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

Juxtaposed with these plaques depicting specific Buddhist figures and themes are numerous representations of divinities from the wider pan-Indian pantheon. These include multiple images of Śiva, including one depicting his *eka-mukha-liṅga* form **(Fig. 9)**, and another in which he is depicted seated *lalitāsana* with his matted locks *(jaṭā)* tied up with a band, a raised phallus (*ūrdvaliṅga*), holding a rosary (*mālā*) in his right hand, and his primary attribute, the trident (*trisula*), in his left. This figure may, consequently, be identifiable as Īśāna **(Fig. 10)**, one of the directional guardians (*dikpāla*).[5] Other directional guardians can be found in the easily recognizable representations of Agni **(Fig. 11)**, shown as a bearded male figure squatting and surrounded by flames, and Varuṇa **(Fig. 12)**, depicted seated *lalitāsana*, holding in his right hand the identifying attribute of a noose represented as a snake wound like a rope (*nāgapāśa*) (Wessels-Mevissen 2001: 101–2, esp. note 507). One additional plaque depicts the solar god Sūrya **(Fig. 13)**, exhibited with the standard iconographic attributes of boots and leather armor and holding a lotus flower in each hand. While often an independent cult figure in medieval Bengal, Sūrya also appears as both a directional guardian (*lokapāla*) and as one of the planetary deities (*graha*) (Bhattasali 2001: 148–73; Markel 1991; Mevissen 2011, 2012). At least two other planetary deities are recognizable: Rāhu **(Fig. 14)**, the demon of eclipses, depicted torso-less holding the moon in his cupped hands, and an unfortunately damaged plaque of Ketu **(Fig. 15)**, the deity associated with comets, depicted with the lower body of a serpent.[6] There is also a possible representation of the planetary deity Saturn (Śani) **(Fig. 16)**, shown as a portly, possibly limping, figure with the hair and beard of an ascetic, holding the attributes of a *mālā* in one hand and a seemingly specific type of club or staff (*kiṅkiṇī / khakkara*) in the other (Mevissen 2000: 1273–4). One final group of plaques within this category of divine representation worthy of note is the quite unique, and perhaps unprecedented in Buddhist contexts, rendering of three therianthropic images of the zodiac (*rāśi*) as deities, including Pisces (Mīna), Cancer (Karkaṭa), and Scorpio (Vrścika) **(Figs 17–19)**.

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The consortium of representation within the collection of extant terracotta sculptures from Nandadīrghi *vihāra* is, to be sure, decidedly eclectic. Yet this eclecticism is not without precedent or parallel, as comparable sculptural corpora — dating between the 7th and 8th centuries CE and preserved partially *in situ* — can be recognized at Antichak, Nalanda Temple No. 2 and

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[5] For the iconography of Īśāna, see Wessels-Mevissen 2001: 106–7, who notes the relatively 'generic' aspects of his representation, in which he is "largely identical with the god Śiva".

[6] See Markel 1990 for a detailed account of the iconographic development of these two planetary deities.

FIG. 9 *Śiva* Maheśvara/Ekamukhaliṅga, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 10 *Śiva/Īśāna* with Peacocks, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 11
Agni, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 12
Varuṇa, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State
Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

Fig. 13. *Sūrya*, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 14
Rāhu, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State
Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

Fig. 15 *Ketu*, Terracotta plaque, Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

Fig. 16 *Śani*, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological Museum of
West Bengal

Fig. 17
Mīna (*Pisces*) *Rāśi*, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

Fig. 18
Karkaṭa (*Cancer*) *Rāśi*, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

Fig. 19
Vṛścika (*Scorpio*) *Rāśi*, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

Paharpur.[7] Even a cursory survey of the stone and terracotta sculptures from these sites reveal striking stylistic and iconographic correlations with the Nandadīrghi terracottas, and it would seem difficult not to view them collectively as iterations of a shared visual and ritual milieu (cf. Asher 1975; Samuel 2002: 44; Gill 2007: 183; Kim 2018: 395–400; Prasad 2018; Sanyal 2018: 138–9). Perhaps the most marked correspondence between these bodies of sculpture, however, is the diverse plurality of divinities represented, a significant proportion of which have been variously characterized as 'Brahmanical', 'Hindu', or 'non-Buddhist'.[8]

The incorporation of such deities within the sculptural programs of these sites has prompted at least two distinct but divergent interpretations. In the cases of Nalanda Temple No. 2 and Paharpur specifically, the liberal distribution of sculptural depictions of a range of deities drawn from the so-called 'Brahmanical' pantheon has been viewed by some as incongruous with an architectural Buddhist context, resulting in a reticence to identify these structures as possessing a Buddhist affiliation (Deva and Agrawala 1950; Deva 1980; Wessels-Mevissen 2001: 31; Lefevre 2012, 2014).[9] Alternatively, the presence of sculptures identified as representing 'Brahmanical' or 'Hindu' deities at each of these three sites has been interpreted as evidence that the structures they were associated with (viz. Antichak, Nalanda Temple No. 2, and Paharpur) were conceived as architectural instantiations of Buddhist *maṇḍalas* (Gail 1999; Huntington and Chandrasekhar 2000: 63–4; Samuel 2002; Hermann-Pfandt 2008, 2012,

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[7] See the survey of terracotta plaques at Antichak in Sahai 1971, many of which were found *in situ* surrounding the central cruciform shrine of the main *vihāra* complex. For Nalanda Temple No. 2, see the descriptions of the stone sculptures surrounding the exterior of the structure's lower plinth in Deva and Agrawala 1950, and for Paharpur, see the stone and terracotta sculptures once embedded in different levels along the exterior of the main cruciform shrine documented in Dikshit 1938: 37–72. It is possible that the terracotta sculptures discovered at Salban *vihāra* in Mainamati might be added to this list of comparable sculptural corpora, though these remain sparsely documented and unevenly published — but see at least Uddin and Rezowana 2015.

[8] For images of Viṣṇu, Śiva Ardhanārīśvara, and Hanumān at Antichak, see Sahai 1971: 65–7, Figs 9–11. The Nalanda stone sculptures which have been identified as 'Brahmanical' can be found in Deva and Agrawala 1950: 199–212, Nos. 2, 4, 7,13, 33, 54, 59, 77, 78, 88, 102, 103, 104, 159; for images at Paharpur, see Dikshit 1938: 37–54, 56–60, Plates XXVII a–d, XXVIII a–d, XXIX b, XXX a–d, XXXI a–d, XXXI a/b/d; XXXIII a/c/d, XXXVI c, XXXVII d, XLIV a/b/d/e, which include, variously, representations of Agni, Sūrya, Vāyu, Īśāna/Maheśvara, Rāma, Brāhma, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, and Gaṇeśa, as well as planetary deities.

[9] The tendency to view such imagery in rigid sectarian terms, that is to say, as the property of a single religious group, may be an outmoded misapprehension, or at the very least misrepresentative, especially in the context of the medieval period. A substantial — and ever increasing — body of both textual and art historical scholarship has amply demonstrated that during this period, the boundaries between various religious communities appears to have been remarkably porous, in which interchanges of ritual practices and the veneration of the same or similar deities was commonplace, though there continues to be considerable debate about potential explanatory models for the emergence of this eclectic, shared cultic culture. See further discussion in Bhattacarya 1930; Mallmann 1964, 1968; Seyfort-Ruegg 1964, 2001, 2008; Asher 1980: 49; Linrothe 1990; Sanderson 1995, 2009; Bautze-Picron 1996; Bühnemann 1996, 1999; Granoff 2000; Verardi 2003; Amar 2012; Prasad: 2013, 2018; Morrissey 2020.

Prasad 2018: 329). In support of this hypothesis, scholars have turned to textual descriptions of *maṇḍalas* which include 'non-Buddhist' divinities within the highly ordered assemblies of deities of these constructed ritual spaces, either positioned at the outer precincts or exterior of the *maṇḍala* itself, where they occupy a marginal role as guardians of the *laukika* or 'mundane' realm.[10]

Neither of these two interpretations would appear to be particularly compelling or persuasive for the architectural context of the Nandadīrghi *vihāra* sculptures. The first might be dismissed rather quickly. In spite of the fact that the specific architectural placement of the Nandadīrghi sculptures remains unknown, the location of their discovery amidst the debris of the excavated *vihāra* would seem to firmly establish their association with this Buddhist structure, rendering any presumption that they belonged to a non-Buddhist architectural context highly improbable. In regard to the second interpretation, what might be referred to as the '*maṇḍala* hypothesis', the viability of its application to the Nandadirghika *vihāra* and associated sculptures would appear to be undermined by a number of factors. First, this hypothesis provides little, if any, account for the significant proportion of temporal, secular themes represented in the Nandadīrghi corpus of sculptures — images such as various animals (birds, deer, lions, elephants, bulls, snakes, etc.), musicians, dancing figures, and devotees as well as a large number of soldiers and other martial figures. Secondly, there appears to be no indication among the Nandadīrghi sculptures of any hierarchical distinction or arrangement amongst the different categories of divine figures, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or temporal representations. All of the sculpted plaques are of a relatively uniform size, and accordingly seemed to have occupied a shared position within a decorative frieze surrounding the exterior of the *vihāra* (Roy 2012: 96). This uniformity of representation and location stands in stark contrast to the highly specified ordering of the assemblies of deities in Buddhist *maṇḍalas*, in which invariably there is an explicit division between interior and exterior space, the former reserved for higher-status *lokkottara* beings such as Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or other luminaries of the Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna pantheon, while the latter is generally designated as the abode of subordinate *laukika* or guardian divinities (Bautze-Picron 1996: 131; Luczanits 2008: esp. 113, 119–20; Dalton 2011: 64–74). Finally, there may be significant typological differences to take into account between the architectural form of the structure at Nandadīrghi, which was a standard quadrangular-type *vihāra*, and the far more complex and elaborate architectural spaces at Antichak and Paharpur, as well as the structure at Nalanda site No. 2. Unlike the other sites, the latter does not appear to have had any residential quarters. It is not at all clear that each of these structures would

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[10] The *maṇḍala* assemblies most often cited in support of this hypothesis include those of the *garbhadhātu, vajradhātu,* and *dharmadhātuvāgiśvara*, as articulated in such varied textual sources as *Mahāvairocanatantra*, the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*, and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, see references cited in Gail 1999: 132–3 and Hermann-Pfandt 2012:122–7.

have been conceived of in similar terms, let alone be identifiable as architectural forms of specific *maṇḍalas* primarily on the basis of the characteristics of their external sculptural embellishment.[11]

In seeking an alternative interpretative framework for the Nandadīrghika sculptures, it would seem important, at the very least, to acknowledge that esoteric Buddhist tantras or ritual compendia such as the *Niṣpannayogāvali* are certainly not the only Buddhist literary sources in which so-called 'Brahmanical' or 'Hindu' deities appear. In fact, as part of a larger category of pan-Indian *laukika* deities, they appear frequently in various capacities throughout Buddhist canonical and non-canonical texts. But they feature most prominently, perhaps, in what has been categorized by Peter Skilling as the '*rakṣā*' genre of Buddhist literature (Skilling 1992). As Skilling has observed, texts belonging to the *rakṣā* class belong to all chronological strata of Buddhist literature and across Śrāvakayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna contexts. In texts of this expansive genre, a whole host of divine and semi-divine beings — often associated with the cardinal directions or with specific geographical locales — are invoked orally through verse and/or mantra /*dhāraṇī* /*vidyā* for either propitiation or appeasement in order to ensure the wellbeing of devotees or supplicants through the conferral of protection from a wide range of malign influences and calamities, such as snake bite, disease, inauspicious omens, malicious deities, adverse weather, fire, theft, various enemies, karmic consequence, etc. (Lévi 1915; Bareau 1959; Skilling 1992: 159; Strauch 2014: 64–7; Hidas 2015: 134; Tournier 2016). According to Skilling, the earliest prototype of Buddhist *rakṣā* literature may have been the *Āṭānāṭiyasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, in which the Buddha receives a series of verses from Vaiśravaṇa invoking the Seven Buddhas of the past along with the four Guardian Kings of the cardinal directions and their respective retinues of *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, *gandharvas*, and *kumbhāṇḍas*, the recitation of which provides protection from threats by non-humans or 'unsympathetic demons' for monks, nuns and lay followers dwelling in remote forest locations (Skilling 1992: 168; Walshe 1995: 471–8; Gethin 1998: 168; cf. Strauch 2014: 64). Intriguingly, Skilling has also further observed that there may have been an important relationship between the *rakṣā* genre of literature and Buddhist material culture. Though he confined his remarks to early Buddhist sites such as Bharhut, Bodh Gaya, and Sanchi, he has suggested that the relief sculptures of the Seven Buddhas and their trees, the Four Great Kings, Indra, *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, and goddesses on the gateways and railings of these monuments "can only be understood in the light of such texts as one of the greatest *rakṣās*, the *Āṭānāṭikasūtra*" and that they "imply the existence of a lore and liturgy which belongs in part to the *rakṣā* literature." (Skilling 1992:

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[11] Cf. Samuel 2002: 51–2; also Huntington and Chandrasekhar 2000: 65, where it is aptly noted that Buddhist architectural forms could be highly variable and localized: "…specialized structures at [Buddhist] monastic complexes are dependent on local teachers, the supporting laity, and specific traditions practiced in the region."

162–3). Similarly, in his edition of a leather folio fragment — most likely from Bamiyan and dated to the 6th/7th century CE — containing verses from the *Diśāsauvastikagāthās*, Vincent Tournier has noted a correspondence between the "complex pantheon" of constellations (*nakṣatrā*), goddesses (*devakumārī*), guardian kings (*adhipati*), sacred mountains (*parvata*), and *caityas* invoked for protection in this text and the iconography of the extant Buddhist material culture of the Bamiyan region, which both reflects and accords with "what we know of the devotion directed to *laukika* deities by people from the Hindu Kush" (Tournier 2016: 417–19).

There is a distinct possibility, consequently, that the theme of protection may provide a productive lens through which to view and analyze the sculptures from Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, that they too may "imply a lore and liturgy" imbued by the apotropaic *imaginaire* expressed in Buddhist *rakṣā* literature. It is certainly not difficult to see in numerous instances within the Nandadīrghi corpus the representation of figures which exhibit explicit associations with protective proclivities and propensities. The capacity to bestow security and protection is, of course, first and foremost an integral aspect of the conception of the Buddha **(Fig. 1)** widely attested throughout Buddhist literature from the earliest periods, in which his physical presence was often heralded to ward off threats from non-humans as well as to assuage fear from all manner of potential dangers (Strauch 2014: 64).[12] Bodhisattvas, too, are consistently lauded for their ability to provide protection, perhaps most vividly in the description of Avalokiteśvara **(Fig. 3)** as a 'savior from perils' found in the 24th chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkā sūtra* (Kern 1963 (1884): 406–9) or in the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, where the recitation of the litany of names of Mañjuśrī also protects one from the eight great terrors (*aṣṭamahābhaya*), and, in addition, meditation on the body of Mañjuśrī ensures "continually day and night", protection from Brahmā, Indra, Upendra, Rudra, Nārāyaṇa, Sanatkumāra, Maheśvara, Kārttikeya, Mahākāla, Maṇḍikeśvara, Yama, Varuṇa, Kuvera, Hārītī, and the guardians of the world in the ten directions (Davidson 1995: 121–2). Whether identifiable as Manasā or Jāṅgulī **(Fig. 5)**, this goddess as protectress against snakebite also exhibits an unequivocal association with *rakṣā*. This same association with protection can also be seen with Agni, Varuṇa, and Īśāna **(Figs 10–12)**, especially in their capacity as *dik-* or *loka -pālas* (Wessels-Mevissen 2001), as well as, when appeased, with astral deities such as the *grahas* Rāhu, Ketu, Śani, and Sūrya **(Figs 13–16)**, and the deified *rāśī* of Pisces, Cancer and Scorpio **(Figs 17–19)** (Markel 1991; Mevissen 2009, 2012). Even the representation of a *stūpa* **(Fig. 6)** might be viewed analogously to the invocation of a *caitya* for protection as seen in the *Diśāsauvastikagāthās* (Tournier 2016: 412).

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[12] See in addition the textual references cited in Skilling 1992: 110–12, as well as a passage in the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mulasarvāstivādavinaya* (Derge Tha 16b.3–.6), which recounts eighteen blessings whenever the Buddha enters any place, that includes "no fear" from fire, water, lions, tigers, leopards, foreign armies, thieves, custom officers, fares, taxes, escort's wages, humans, and non-humans.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the most proportionately significant theme represented within the extant Nandadīrghi corpus — that is to say, the type of image most repeated — consisted by far of soldier-type martial figures armed with spears, swords, bow and arrows, etc. **(Figs 20–21),** and the function of these as guardians or protectors would appear to be obvious.[13]

Collectively, these representations within the Nandadīrghi sculptures would appear to constitute an undeniably powerful pantheon of both celestial and terrestrial protective figures, and might be effectively recognized as a visual counterpart to the expansive assemblies of protective forces not uncommonly delineated in various texts of the *rakṣa* genre of Buddhist literature. A particularly noteworthy correspondence in this regard can be seen, for example, in the *Mahāpratisarāmahāvidyārājñī*, a text likely composed as early as the 6th century CE. By the 8th century CE, though, it had been incorporated into the group of 'apotropaic scriptures' known as the *Pañcarakṣā* (the 'Five Protections'), for which there are a substantial number of Sanskrit manuscript witnesses from eastern India dating to the medieval period (Hidas 2012: 7–8, 24). There are various sections in this text which enumerate the benefits for those practitioners who would concentrate on, meditate on, recite, write down, read, memorize, etc., or who would wear on their bodies in the form of an amulet the *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* of this spell (*vidyā*) (Hidas 2012: 25–31). Amongst these benefits are protection from numerous divinities as well as Buddhas and bodhisattvas, as expressed in the 13th section of the text:

> Whoever wears this spell ties around his neck or arm:
> All his goals will be accomplished, there is no doubt. //11//
> Lords of the Devas and Nāga-Kings always protect him,
> Bodhisattvas of great vigour, the Buddhas and the Pratyekanāyakas, //12//
> The Śrāvakas of all the Buddhas, the Vidyādevīs of great supernatural power
> Constantly protect the one who wears the Amulet. //13//
> Vajrapāṇi, the King of Yakṣas, and the Four Kings
> Will protect him day and night, there is no doubt. //14//
> Śakra, along with the Thirty [Devas], Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara,
> Nandikeśa, Mahākāla, Kārttikeya, Gaṇeśvara, //15//
> All hosts of Divine Mothers and others belonging to Māra,
> Powerful Ṛṣis and Devas of great supernatural power //16//
> Will always protect the one who wears the amulet.
> The magnanimous Buddhas, and greatly powerful Vidyādevīs, //17//
> Māmaki ...…etc.,
> and numerous other Vidyās who do favours for beings //23//
> Will protect one who has the spell in his hand.[14]

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[13] See Roy 2012: 91–3, Plates 76a-i–78a-i) for a typology of soldiers/martial figures represented and over two dozen illustrated examples.

[14] Hidas 2012: 206–7.

And further, in the concluding section of the text [51]:

> Vajrapāṇi, the King of Yakṣas, Indra, the Lord of Śacī,
> Hārītī and Pāñcika, the Guardians of the World of great supernatural
> power, //1//
> The sun and the moon with the constellations, the utterly frightening
> planets,
> All the Great Nāgas, deities and Ṛṣis, //2//
> Asuras, Garuḍas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas
> Are bound constantly to protect that person who possesses the greatly
> powerful spell. //3// [15]

It is not the intention here to assert a direct relationship between the *Mahāpratisarāmahā–vidyārājñī* and the Nandadīrghi sculptures, but rather to suggest more of a conceptual overlap, that both can be seen as parallel expressions of a broader ritual culture in which an expansive — and at least partially shared — pantheon of protective deities was accessible. In the case of the Nandadīrghi sculptures, the placement of various representations drawn from this pantheon on the exterior of the *vihāra* walls would have made it explicitly and publicly visible that the monastery, and by association those residing within it, were fully protected by this familiar and impressive array of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as divine and terrestrial guardians.[16] The exterior location of these sculptures might have made it equally visible, moreover, that the powerful apotropaic potential of this pantheon was — or could be made to be — available to others. This, in turn, may suggest that the conferral of protection through the performance of rituals that invoked this pantheon may have been one of the ways through which the Buddhist monastic community resident at Nandadīrghi *vihāra* interacted with — or at least sought to interact with — the wider social world, and this dynamic may have been important in establishing successful and enduring networks of patronage.[17]

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[15] Hidas 2012: 250–1.

[16] For what may be interesting parallels in this regard, see Schopen 1998, 2002, and 2004 for a discussion of a series of passages in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* which establish that monks were required to recite verses daily for the benefit of the "gods of the *vihāra*," seemingly for protective purposes, and that these gods were both recognized as guardians of the *vihāra* (*vihāra-pāla) and incorporated through the performance of a specific ritual as formal members of *Mūlasarvāstivādin* monastic communities. As Schopen points out, the worship of different categories of *devas*, including local deities associated with parks and forests, etc., as well as gods like Śiva, Varuṇa, Kubera, etc., by monks came to be a matter of considerable, if unresolved, debate within the *Mūlasarvāstivādin* commentarial tradition.

[17] See Schopen 2013 for a survey of various literary sources in which Buddhist monks participate in auspicious rituals (*maṅgala*) for the benefit of laymen, as well as specific *Mūlasarvāstivādin* sources which suggest that children may have been gifted to Buddhist monasteries specifically because of the ability of monastic communities to protect them. See also Davidson 2017 for an analysis of a monastic rain ritual involving *nāgas* found in the *Mūlamantra which Davidson describes as "…. an important facet of Buddhist ritual enterprise: the cultivation of divine serpents for the purpose of

FIG. 20
Soldier / Martial figure, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 21
Soldier/Martial figure, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

bringing rain to communities of their patrons." (Davidson 2017: 161).

Fig. 22 Peacock, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 23
Musician, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State Archaeological
Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 24
Musician, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State
Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 25
Musician, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur.
Photo: author, courtesy of State
Archaeological Museum of West Bengal

FIG. 26
Dancing figure, Terracotta plaque,
Nandadīrghi *vihāra*, Jagjivanpur
Photo: Akira Shimada, courtesy of
State Archaeological Museum
of West Bengal

While the role of protection can be sufficiently discerned for a significant proportion of the imagery of the Nandadīrghi sculptures, there is one other category of representation within the overall corpus for which such an association is not readily apparent. There are a large number of plaques which depict temporal themes, such as a wide variety of animals, including numerous representations of birds **(Figs 10 and 22)**, musicians, both naturalistic and fantastical **(Figs 23–25)**, and dancing figures **(Fig. 26)**. These types of images have had a long historical presence in Buddhist sculptural art and undoubtedly served multivalent functions in different architectural spaces, though they have been most often viewed in their relation to beauty and auspiciousness. Yet within a Buddhist ritual context, such imagery seems to have occupied a more specific function. In the *Mañjuśriyamūlakalpa*, for example, there is an elaborate description of the initial ritual procedures necessary for the production of cloth paintings *(paṭa)* for various ritual functions (Kapstein 1995). Following the completion of these initial ritual procedures, the ritual officiant is then directed to observe the natural environment for auspicious and inauspicious omens.

> After the completion of these ritual rites of protection and consecration, the adept observes closely the signs that become manifest in the surrounding environment: the appearance of birds associated with water, sky, with whatever is pure and bright, birds such as peacocks, herons, geese, and brahmani ducks; or the sounds of drums, cymbals, and other musical instruments, of persons singing auspicious songs or shouting gay exclamations, of bells and benedictions — all of these signify success....On the other hand, he may hear people shouting inauspicious or harsh phrases —catch it!' 'eat it! 'smash it!' 'break it' and the like — or one may see or hear animals such as the monkey, buffalo, ass, cat, and so on, that are regarded as base and inauspicious... (Kapstein 1995: 248)

This ritual process, though, appears to have been constrained by a somewhat fatal flaw, as Kapstein observes: "Of course, one can well imagine certain locations in northeastern India, where your chances of performing this rite without even so much as a monkey turning up are well-nigh non-existent" (Kapstein 1995: 248). One solution to this problem is addressed in this section of the text itself, which asserts that a practitioner can repeat the initial ritual preparations up so seven times if bad omens continue to appear (Kapstein: 1995: 248). An alternative solution to the unreliable appearance of auspicious omens in the natural world during ritual performances may, however, have been provided by the Nandadīrghi sculptures. The embedding of representations of positive omens such as peacocks, ducks, musicians, dancers, and singers, etc., along the exterior of the *vihāra* may have been a functional and pragmatic method to ensure — however manufactured and, perhaps, artificial — a permanently ritually efficacious environment, one that was visibly marked by the fixed presence of the signs necessary for success.

CONCLUSION

These observations are, of course, tentative, and are offered here only as a preliminary attempt to pursue a potentially fruitful line of inquiry for situating the roles of sculpture in Buddhist architectural contexts of the medieval period. Rather than relying on the tendency to view the diversity and plurality of the extant sculptural corpora of medieval eastern India through the rigid binaries of Buddhist and Brahmanical, or 'non-Buddhist', or reductively as reflecting the appropriation and 'subordinate integration' of rival cults (cf. Prasad 2018), it may be important to acknowledge that Buddhist 'art' in monastic contexts may have been far more strategically deployed than previously considered. In this regard, the Nandadīrghi terracotta plaques may stand as a particularly useful body of visual evidence that illuminates the conception of at least one Buddhist monastery of the medieval period in eastern India: a sacral space carefully and thoroughly articulated to make publicly visible an accessible Buddhist monastic community deeply engaged in a ritual culture that was oriented, at least in part, towards the acquisition and cultivation of apotropaic power.

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